STEPPING STONES TO
Evaluating Your Own School Literacy Program

Stepping Stones to Evaluating Your Own School Literacy Program

Jeri Levesque, Ed.D.
Center of Effort, LTD

Danielle Carnahan
Center for Literacy, Learning Point Associates

LEARNING POINT
Associates™

Contents

Introduction

Learning to read is hard work, but learning how to teach reading is even more difficult. While many teachers do not remember how they learned to read, they vividly recall the challenges of teaching children to read. Reading experts' understanding of "how reading works" and "what works in reading" evolves constantly. At the turn of the 20th century, a leading psychologist stated, "And so to completely analyze what we do when we read would almost be the acme of a psychologist's achievements, for it would be to describe very many of the most intricate works of the human mind" (Huey, 1908).

Nearly a century later, the National Reading Panel was established to answer the question, "What does reading research tell us about how to teach children to read?" The panel reviewed thousands of studies to conclude, as did Huey, that reading is a complex process that involves numerous overlapping components or skills. Children are not born with a neural wiring system that makes reading a natural developmental phenomenon such as spoken language (Shaywitz, 2003). Teaching reading, to borrow a phrase, *is* rocket science (Moats, 1999). This means every teacher must have a solid grasp of the knowledge and skills inherent in high-quality reading programs. Being a "rocket scientist" demands state-of-the-art professional development that is grounded solidly in scientific research.

Reading involves sophisticated code-breaking strategies that must be learned in order to comprehend print. Many children learn these through meaningful experiences with good books and often learn to decode without direct instruction in phonics. The more they read, the stronger vocabulary and facility with reading strategies are. This enables readers to construct meaning from complicated print sources. However, most children require carefully designed, direct and explicit instruction coupled with daily opportunities to practice new skills in order to progress consistently. Good reading programs provide an orderly, systematic approach to instruction that scaffolds new learning by building on each skill component of reading.

Classroom teaching alone cannot account for the high degree of variability in students' reading achievement. At the same time, a packaged set of commercial materials (often referred to as the basal or core program) is but one element of a comprehensive schoolwide reading program because every reading program is greater than the sum of its parts. The critical elements found in the reading programs of effective schools include leadership, staff organization, curriculum materials, time management, cultural contexts, assessment, professional development, communication, and parental involvement. Numerous research studies have produced multiple effective program models (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000; Simmons & Kame'enui, 2003).

Stepping Stones to Literacy is a tool for elementary school improvement teams to evaluate and strengthen their reading programs. Each Stepping Stone is a guided activity to stimulate reflection and guide systematic inquiry. It is a collaborative, active research approach to evaluation (Levesque & Hinton 2001). The goal is to eliminate the gap between what the school improvement team states it believes about good reading programs and classroom instruction and actual program practices that work well consistently.

Each chapter introduces key elements of effective schoolwide reading programs with a brief description of research-based practices. These are followed by action guides, called Stepping Stones, that direct the improvement team's attention to critically evaluate the actual program practices going on in their building. These action guides then include directions for following up on program facets in need of improvement.

The Stepping Stones were piloted as a structured interview-and-observation tool in more than 50 elementary schools during their first year of transition to a new schoolwide reading program. While the names have been changed, the vignettes and anecdotes are from data collected in schools ranging from small rural to large metropolitan settings.

We have called *Stepping Stones* a tool for "evaluating "school reading programs. The word "evaluation" can be used to mean formal qualitative or quantitative methodologies, and it can be used more informally to indicate a review approach that is not required to fulfill strict evaluation criteria. We intend this latter meaning; *Stepping Stones* provides a step-by-step and complete framework for reviewing and implementing a school reading program, but it is not a formal evaluation tool.

Stepping Stones is designed flexibly so that it can be used in a variety of settings. Following are a few examples for the use of *Stepping Stones:*

- Begin the use of *Stepping Stones* as soon as summative student assessment data are available. *Stepping Stones* can help target areas in which change is needed in programmatic implementation and alignment.

- Start the school year with an introduction of the 20 *Stepping Stones* topics. Allow teachers and staff to create a self-study team for the school year. These teams can work their way through the manual and stones for the span of the year. By the end of the academic year, multiple points for change will be addressed and feed into the school improvement planning.

- Commence use of *Stepping Stones* at the beginning of the improvement planning process for the next school year. The school improvement team can work to gather data and analyze each Stepping Stone during a six-week period. The resulting information will inform the school improvement goals and plan.

- Identify specific Stepping Stones as areas of focus for the self-study teams. Gather data throughout the school year to inform decision making and planning.

- Plan to implement the *Stepping Stones* system at the same time that a new reading series is adopted. The information will assist in guiding decision makers to a strong, thoughtful implementation.

Whether used in part or whole, as a formal part of improvement planning or an informal reflection guide, *Stepping Stones* can help school teams gather information essential both for understanding the gaps in implementation of their reading program and for developing plans that address such gaps. The ultimate goal, no matter which way the tool is used, is to help schools take decisive steps toward strong implementation of scientifically valid programs.

This product is intended to help schools implement *any* scientifically valid reading program; it is not designed to help schools select a particular program or programs, nor does it require the use of a particular program. Any references to programs in the text are not directed toward any specific core, supplemental, or intervention literacy program. As long as a school's program meets the requirements of the appropriate local, state, and federal guidelines, *Stepping Stones* can help with its implementation.

Chapter 1: Schoolwide Reading Programs

What do we know about good schoolwide reading programs in elementary schools?

Good reading programs are grounded by the conviction that all students will learn to read. Everyone on the staff holds high expectations for student achievement and believes that children can be taught to read regardless of motivation or background (Armor, Conry-Oseguera, Cox, King, McDonnell, & Pascal et al., 1976). Reading is the top priority for the entire school. However, not all schools have a schoolwide program.

Historically, many different types of reading programs have been used in elementary schools, often simultaneously. An eclectic mix of literature-based, comprehensive basal, supplemental, and intervention reading programs all can be found in a single school. Teachers commonly customize reading instruction by choosing from a variety of resources to design their daily instruction to accommodate their personal preferences. As a result, instructional design varies within and across grade levels in a single school. The result is not a comprehensive curriculum. An effective schoolwide comprehensive program, by definition, is based on a systematic design to ensure continuous and consistent instruction for the children as they transition from grade to grade.

Schoolwide reading programs commonly include a set of commercial instruction materials that provide daily guidance for lesson planning and student assessment. Chall and Squire (1991) found that comprehensive basal programs were used in 95 percent of America's school districts, so, obviously, commercial publishers significantly influence how reading is taught in our schools (Anderson, 1985). The commercial programs are designed to match learners with appropriate levels of text difficulty, direct and explicit skills instruction, practice opportunities, and assessments. There currently are three predominant models of reading programs often used together effectively in one school: core programs (also known as basal programs), supplemental programs, and intervention programs (Simmons & Kame'enui, 2003).

Core or basal programs are intended to meet the learning needs of most students. Programs are tools implemented by teachers to ensure that children learn enough in time for the scheduled and mandated assessments (Vaughn, Klingner, & Bryant, 2001). Program components include teacher manuals, student readers, student workbooks, and assessment packages. Teachers use these tools on a daily basis to teach reading as they follow lesson plans systematically laid out in the core program's teacher manuals

When used consistently as designed, a school's choice of core program ensures continuity of reading philosophy and related practices across classrooms and grade levels. School literacy coaches in schools that employ a single core program often say, "We're all on the same page." Teachers bonded by a common instructional framework are better able to collaborate for instructional planning and schoolwide literacy events and to help students transition from one grade level to the next.

Core programs are leveled by grade ability from kindergarten through sixth grade. Guidance documentation in most programs directs teachers to match reading materials such as leveled books and instructional strategies with key reading constructs. Students are taught in small groups in which instruction is targeted to improve their grasp of constructs, such as fluency and phonics.

How does a teacher know whether or not a core program "works"?

Continuous student achievement is the soul of any reading program. Core programs include assessment procedures that give teachers feedback about the extent to which students have mastered specific skills, especially in the early stages of reading. It is important that assessment also identifies students who need additional instruction, support, and practice.

Accountability for reading success requires teachers to engage in the process of validating instruction through discrete student-performance indicators. Reading outcomes guide teachers as they work to ensure that all students reach or exceed the reading-progress levels for their grade as established by state and district standards. A program works when all but a very few children are reading at grade level by the end of the third grade and the few who do struggle also are able to make some progress.

Does following a teacher manual in a core program impede teaching styles?

One of the common assumptions about teaching reading not supported by scientifically based reading research is the notion that it is an art more than a science. However, research does conclude that teaching is art, science, and craft (Joyce & Weil, 1992; Lieberman & Miller, 1991).

Meanwhile, teacher educators tend to encourage preservice teachers to create unique learning environments and learning activities. An unfortunate consequence of this premise is that it promotes the practice of teachers cobbling materials from two or more reading programs as well as supplementing the programs with additional textbooks, children's literature, and commercial products not designed to fit their school's core program. The end result has no unifying philosophy, design, or consistent methodology within or across grade levels. This approach too often fails to scaffold student learning that would have had a much better chance to generate adequate yearly progress (AYP). However, to adopt a core program does not mean teachers should abandon creative teaching styles.

Commercial programs include a wide variety of materials and activities that have been aligned carefully with the central philosophy of the adopted core and its curriculum design. Teaching reading is complex and challenging. In fact, after detailing the intricacies of carefully designed reading programs, Moats (1999) concluded, "Teaching reading is rocket science."

Can educators really prevent reading difficulties?

The National Reading Council (NRC) (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) report recommended that reading instruction be based on scientifically based reading research. The publishing giants of commercial reading programs responded with materials guided by the No. 1 premise of the NRC findings: All but a very few children can be taught to be proficient readers. The conclusion of the NRC is that "most reading difficulties can be prevented" (p. 13). Many school improvement task forces responded to this dictum with the simple question, "How?"

Five years later, that question—and the answer—reflect current data available from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], 2005): The average reading score at age 9 was higher in 2004 than any previous assessment year. Does such improvement prove that the national spotlight on high expectations, coupled with a drive for scientifically driven instruction, could be related to increased student reading achievement? Additional studies are currently under way to compare classroom practice and reading achievement in schools using programs created around scientifically based reading research with those that are not. Early findings indicate that there are significant differences in student achievement depending on the school's instructional practices.

The NRC answer is to provide all children with systematic and explicit instruction on the essential components of reading. The NRC also made recommendations to address students who have a tough time learning to read. Additional instruction for these students is found in supplemental programs. These programs target the teaching of one or more key reading constructs. For example, a kindergarten teacher works with a small group of students in a lesson involving phonemic awareness. The other children in her class work independently or practice reading with a partner. The teacher directs her attention to one student in her small group. She says, "There are three sounds in the word 'tip.' Say the sounds you hear in the word 'tip.'"

The child responds incorrectly with "/t/ /o/ /p/." The error suggests that the child is having difficulty with the ability to notice and work with sounds in spoken language. In this example, the child did not correctly identify the short /I/, or medial vowel in the spoken word. The teacher responds to the child by saying, "The word I said was 'tip.' We hear the vowel sound of short "i" that sounds like /I/. Say "/I/." Now, put it in the word 'tip.'" The child responds correctly and the teacher provides another example of a one syllable word with a short "i" such as "rip." The teacher may provide a practice opportunity by directing the child to take off the beginning consonant /r/ and only say the sounds heard in the rest of the word: /I/ /p/. Later the teacher points out words in the students' books that have the same sound pattern that rhyme with "tip."

What else can be done for the "very few children" who continue to experience reading difficulties?

Research indicates that one in every five children is a struggling reader. By this estimate, more than 10 million children need more time and instruction than is available during the regular whole-class reading period (Shaywitz, 2004). Teachers who have a solid conceptual understanding about the nature of language and literacy can prevent many reading difficulties (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) because effective teachers detect reading problems early, focus

instruction on discrete reading constructs, and modify instruction to avoid more serious problems later when the gap between good readers and poor readers widens. Intervention programs provide students who are performing below grade level with additional direct and explicit instruction. These children require more individualized instruction and structured practice opportunities in one or more of the five essential reading areas (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension).

In the previous example involving phonemic awareness, the teacher does not ignore the error because the ability to hear the difference between vowel sounds is a critical reading skill. Research findings show that children who cannot segment or manipulate spoken language encounter serious reading difficulties (Shaywitz, 2004, Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). The teacher in the example is providing direct and explicit instruction about a critical element of reading.

What is scientifically based reading research?

Scientifically based reading research is the term used in education to denote studies about reading that are grounded in reliable evidence that an instructional practice or program works because the studies are designed by the *gold standard* of scientific inquiry. This means the studies are designed to include scientifically based procedures that enhance their validity (they did what they said they would do) and reliability (repeating the same research steps with the same type of subjects is highly likely to generate the same results).

The scientific methodology guides study planning to help ensure that researchers establish and maintain objectivity, use rigorously disciplined inquiry (e.g., randomized sampling, placement in experimental and control groups), detailed data collection, and finely tuned data-analysis techniques. The National Research Council (Shavelson & Towne, 2002) outlined a series of principles that apply to scientific research. The first principle is to focus on a significant question that can be answered through systematic observation and the accumulation of evidence. This also is known as an empirical investigation. The second principle is to link research to relevant frameworks or theory. Usually, research questions are generated by models that suggest answers that can be investigated. The researcher asks, "What if …?," "What happens when …?," or "How does …?" and then pursues a research design to guide data collection.

As explained by Fletcher and Francis (2004), scientifically based reading research is driven by designs that help researchers determine what methods to use to investigate a question. So, the third principle is to provide a clear and explicit chain of reasoning. This enables the fourth principle of replication and generalization so other researchers can repeat the chain of events to see whether they get similar results with an equivalent sample. The fifth principle is to disseminate the process and findings so the research community can scrutinize and evaluate the study.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act defines scientifically based reading research as research that:

(A) Applies rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading difficulties.

(B) Includes research that:

(i) Employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment.

(ii) Involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn.

(iii) Relies on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations.

(iv) Has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review. (NCLB, 2002a)

What are the five essential components of learning to read identified by scientifically based reading research?

The National Reading Panel (2000) study identified five key elements associated with learning to read: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These constructs are linked to each other by testing findings and theoretical underpinnings found to be highly predictive of reading success. The National Reading Panel defined these terms as the following:

- Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds (also known as phonemes) in spoken words in order to relate speech sounds with print.

- Phonics concerns teaching practices that emphasize how spelling is related to speech sounds in systematic ways. This includes linking print with sounds.

- Reading fluency is a smooth and accurate reading rate.

- Vocabulary is the ability to grasp the meaning of words as well as strategies to learn new words.

- Comprehension involves teaching strategies for understanding and communicating the meaning of all kinds of printed materials.

What happened after the National Reading Panel study?

Subsequent to the release of the National Reading Panel findings, the NCLB Act established the billion-dollar Reading First program to improve the reading achievement of children in high-poverty, low-achieving schools. Reading First is "dedicated to helping states and local school districts establish high-quality, comprehensive reading instruction for all children in kindergarten through third grade" (U.S. Department of Education [ED], 2004, p. 13). The NCLB law requires that states and their local school districts must spend all of these funds on instructional materials, professional development, and practices supported by scientifically based reading research.

Do all schools have Reading First programs?

No, NCLB requires the states to establish a competitive funding process to encourage schools that fail to achieve AYP in reading to apply for Reading First funding. Reading First schools must pledge fidelity to program models that ensure daily uninterrupted periods of direct and explicit instruction. Professional development is essential for developing teachers' foundational knowledge of what they know about reading and the teaching and learning of reading and how they practice instruction firmly grounded in scientifically based reading research.

The NCLB Act (2002b) mandates that teachers in Reading First schools receive "Instruction in the use of screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based instructional reading assessments and other procedures that effectively identify students who may be at risk for reading failure or who are having difficulty in reading."

How is scientifically based reading research embedded in an elementary school reading program?

Let's answer the question with an imaginary scenario that uses Readphast, a fictitious reading program named for its imaginary publisher, and the real Three-Tiered Reading Model (University of Texas–Austin, 2003).

During a job interview, a candidate, Ms. Leko asks, "What is your reading curriculum?" A member of the interview team, Mr. Bishop, responds quickly, "We're a Readphast program." Ms. Leko, fresh out of a teacher education program wracks her brain wondering, "What does that mean? What approach to reading does Readphast employ?" She asks herself, "What should I know about teaching in order to fit into this reading program?" People unfamiliar with the teacher manual probably have few clues to the unique facets of Readphast or, for that matter, any other program.

A more informed response that explains how scientifically based reading research is embedded in the reading program is to identify the instructional model that structures the curriculum. Mr. Bishop could say, "Our program is based on the Three-Tiered Reading Model, a framework for organizing and providing early, preventive intervention to students who are struggling with learning to read" (University of Texas-Austin, 2003). Mr. Bishop continues, "Scientifically based reading research drives the scope and sequence of how to teach constructs, such as manipulating the sounds of speech, and later connect these sounds with print. Some children get this right off the bat. They don't require additional instruction beyond the daily 90 minutes of uninterrupted instruction provided for all of the students in class during Tier I. We have other children who need additional time and instruction in smaller groups during time outside of Tier I. They are placed in supplemental, or Tier II, instructional groups where they have an additional 30 minutes every day to work with a teacher individually or in small groups to develop the skills they need to become proficient readers. Then, for children identified with specific reading problems, we have Tier III sessions of even more structured additional daily instruction."

Mr. Bishop might elaborate by explaining that learning to read begins before children are exposed to principles of the alphabet. Even before children memorize the graphic symbols of the ABCs it is important that they can recognize and differentiate the sounds of spoken language. Scientifically based reading research concludes that the ability to separate speech sounds, known as phonemic awareness, is the most powerful predictor of later reading success (National Reading Panel, 2000).

At a minimum, a high-quality core program must be based on scientifically based reading research and includes the following:

- Phonemic awareness instruction.
- Systematic, explicit phonics instruction.
- Fluency instruction.
- Vocabulary instruction.
- Text comprehension instruction (University of Texas-Austin, 2003).

Are commercially produced programs and core programs part of a bigger conceptual program model?

If they are not, they should be. In the previous example about the Readphast program, Mr. Bishop described the three-tiered model as the organizational framework of his school's schoolwide program. It consists of three tiers or levels of instruction: Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III: a prevention model that aims at catching students early—before they fall behind—and provides the support they need to be able to read at or above grade level.

Do the three tiers allow teachers to practice differentiated instruction?

Yes. Students may be taught in just Tier I or have extensive learning needs met by three distinct sessions of reading instruction. Tier I, designed to address the needs of the majority of students, is made up of three primary attributes: (1) a core reading program based on scientifically based reading research; (2) benchmark testing of students to determine instructional needs at least three times per year (fall, winter, and spring); and (3) ongoing professional development to provide teachers with the necessary tools to ensure that every student receives quality reading instruction (University of Texas–Austin, 2003). Classroom teachers often also are able to meet the needs of the majority of students by the use of flexible grouping and targeting specific skills for instruction.

Tier II focuses on the needs of those students for whom concentrated instruction within the classroom is insufficient. These students require instruction additional to the time allotted for core reading instruction, thus Tier II provides them with an additional 30 minutes of intensive small-group reading instruction, daily. The aim is to support and reinforce skills being taught by the classroom teacher.

Tier III targets the few students that have received Tier II instruction and continue to show marked difficulty in acquiring the necessary reading skills. These students require instruction that is more explicit, more intense, and specifically meets their individual needs. In Tier III an additional 30 minutes can be provided, but movement through the tiers is a dynamic process, with students entering and exiting as needed (University of Texas-Austin, 2003).

What are supplemental programs and services?

Supplemental programs and services provide interventions in the form of before-school, afterschool, and weekend programs for students performing below grade level. They are used to support and strengthen the core reading program and ensure delivery of high-quality reading instruction aligned with the core curriculum. For example, extra practice in a supplemental program may include extra decodable texts for practice in phonics or a curriculum for phonological awareness. All supplemental materials, programs, and services should be well-integrated with ongoing high-quality classroom instruction (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) and connected with ongoing classroom-instruction experiences.

When you analyze a reading program, carefully examine all supplemental and intervention materials to ensure: (1) coherent and comprehensive reading instruction, (2) alignment with the selected core reading program, and (3) that the materials and programs are based on scientific reading research (Ohio Department of Education, 2004).

There are three good arguments to analyze the quality of any reading programs, textbooks, curriculum kits, and educational software before writing a purchase order. First, they represent significant financial investments because such commercial programs are expensive. Second, teachers, especially novices, rely extensively on published lesson plans and materials, so they must be clear and unambiguous. Third, these programs can and should significantly impact student learning.

What has scientifically based reading research revealed about highly effective teachers?

According to Taylor and Pearson (2000), teachers who work in schools identified as most effective are urged and supported to do the following:

- Reach out to parents.
- Emphasize small-group instruction (60 minutes) in addition to whole-class instruction (24 minutes).
- Provide an extra edge with an opportunity for independent reading (averaging 28 minutes per day).
- Supplement explicit phonics instruction by coaching students in applying phonics to real text.
- Emphasize all levels of comprehension, especially higher-order comprehension, and writing in response to reading.

What are the essential components of core reading programs?

Well-designed programs include explicit instructional strategies, coordinated instructional sequences, ample opportunities for student practice, and student materials aligned with the five key constructs of reading. Commercially packaged core programs usually include a teacher manual that includes explicit instructions for the teacher to follow for each step of the lesson plans and other activities. The program is intended to guide instruction every day throughout each grade level. Commercial packages usually include the following:

- Goals or the mission of the reading program (scope and sequence of essential skills and strategies).

- The division of time devoted to reading and language arts (daily schedules for large and small-group instruction as well as supplemental instruction for struggling readers).

- Competency criteria and frequent use of a variety of instructional strategies, materials, and practice activities.

- A myriad of optional accessories, from big books to DVDs.

- Schoolwide and community activities to promote positive reading attitudes and development, such as ways to promote parental involvement.

The bulk of elementary school reading programs can employ either of the following approaches to their reading curriculum:

- A comprehensive, multileveled basal or core curriculum published by a large, well-known corporation used systematically in the primary grades by all teachers; there may be two or more programs adopted—one for K–3 (primary) and another for Grade 4 through middle school.

- An eclectic approach in which individual teachers select instructional materials according to their personal philosophies of reading and preferred teaching methods; there may or may not be any consistency of program adoption or use of instructional strategies within or across grade levels.

Is an eclectic approach just as effective as a core program?

No. Research by Dickenson and Tabors (2001) on professional development found that many teachers lack an understanding of basic child development as well as knowledge about language and literacy. When left to mix-and-match practices based on personal beliefs about how children learn to read and write, the outcome is a weak program evidenced by low student achievement. If a school's reading program has not been successful with a large number of their students, a self-study should be commissioned. The charge to the inhouse self-study team is to consider whether to select a new comprehensive reading program or to modify the existing program to meet district expectations and student needs.

Chapter 2: Establishing a Self-Study Leadership Team

Where should a school begin to do a self-study of its reading program?

Just as reading is a complex process, reading programs are multifaceted packages. A reading program includes far more than a commercial package of instructional materials. A study about school factors related to reading achievement identified an appreciable number of school and teacher factors often intertwined and closely linked with student achievement (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000). The study concluded that effective schools—as measured by student reading achievement—are characterized by a collaborative model of instructional delivery. However, instruction alone, the researchers cautioned, is not the sole determinate of student achievement. Schoolwide reading programs are made of tangible as well as intangible factors, such as the literacy environment, building-level communication, instructional leadership, and parental involvement.

Meanwhile, all the instructional materials—including lesson plans, curriculum units, games, and student manipulatives—are at best a means to an end. The national goal for reading is that all students read on grade level by the end of the third grade (NCLB, 2002). Reading program evaluation needs to begin with analysis of how well students perform on standardized measures of reading at the end of third grade. Those test scores can answer key questions such as the following:

- Do students make AYP as defined by the state's department of education?
- If not, where, according to key skill areas, are they not making progress?
- How does the reading program address children who are not proficient readers?

If the answer to the first question is "no," followed by two responses of "don't know," it is time to evaluate because schools cannot afford to wait until children reach the end of third grade to figure out that the program failed to meet their learning needs.

Ideally, student achievement is an ongoing process based on systematic and objective measures. Formal and informal assessments are valuable tools to guide daily instruction when the tests effectively measure proficiency in each of the five key constructs of reading. Since reading is best learned when students get high-quality instruction, low student proficiency in discrete skill areas can be inferred to correlate with weak areas or gaps in the core program. Student achievement is also linked with teachers' knowledge and competencies about direct and explicit instruction.

Engaging in systematic reform of a reading program is expensive in time, money, and hard work. The National Reading Panel (2000) recommended that school systems develop and use data-based decision making. Evaluators and planners of schoolwide reading programs should include methods and means for analyzing their schools' strengths and weaknesses. This is necessary to target and prioritize needs and conduct a cost-benefits analysis (National Reading Panel, 2000). Each school's self-study leadership team is also advised to plan an implementation schedule with a clear timeline for teacher buy-in, materials requisition, orientation, and scheduling changes. Keeping reform priorities in mind, the team also should plan to collect data that, for one,

monitor the fidelity of implementation—the effort to faithfuly reproduce the reading program as intended, designed, packaged—and two, most importantly, are sufficient to allow them to evaluate the progress of student outcomes. The last step, since reading is a public priority, is to share their findings with key stakeholders.

What is involved to set up a thorough self-study of a school's reading program?

One way to approach this question is to establish a self-study leadership team charged with evaluating the current reading program. When program evaluation is viewed as a function of leadership, the principal is likely to commission the team. However, caution is advised when choosing building representatives to serve on it. A well-balanced team could include teachers with solid reading instruction histories of success, the reading coach, a special education teacher, and a building administrator. A useful addition is a parent representative, which also ensures compliance with Title I schools' guidance for parent involvement.

The team needs to determine the extent to which the current program is used for its intended purposes—successful grade-by-grade advancement of student achievement in reading. Another dimension to examine is program quality, measured primarily by the extent to which the program is grounded in scientific research. The team's study itself must be a disciplined, systematic process of inquiry. Then the team's goals and processes must identify practices, materials, and program designs that are strongly predictive of student achievement as well as those that are not.

The best results occur when the self-study leadership team is entrusted with project ownership that empowers it to make decisions. School improvement teams routinely begin a self-study by reviewing who they are and who they teach. A useful exercise is to begin with the school's mission and vision statements about reading.

Are mission and vision statements really useful for a program evaluation?

A mission statement is vital for a team to have a shared and clear objective—a simple statement of purpose to become known by every member of the school community. Mission statements are concise statements constructed to suggest an action, identify this action in general terms, and include a social categorization. For example, "the mission of the Middlebridge Elementary School reading program is to provide a supportive and positive learning environment in which all children achieve reading success."

Meanwhile, a vision statement expresses the team's destination in a way that builds commitment. For example, "The vision of Middlebridge Elementary School's reading program is to demonstrate fidelity to the core program by providing scientifically based reading research instruction and expecting reading proficiency for all students." The team should provide evidence that reading is the school's top priority, which determines how existing funds are spent, how time is managed, and how reading is taught in every classroom.

Stepping Stone 1: Mission and Vision of the School Reading Program

Write a brief explanation in Figure 1 of how the school's mission and vision guide annual planning and year-end reflection about the effects of the reading program on student achievement.

Figure 1. Mission and Vision of Reading Program

Mission
Vision

Stepping Stone 2: Roles and Responsibilities of the Self-Study Leadership Team

Members of effective self-study leadership teams have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Role clarity ensures that every person on the team knows what is expected and how and when results are due to be delivered. Role conflicts can be avoided—certainly minimized—when each person realizes how their contribution enhances the entire project.

The following chart represents expectations for literacy behaviors and leadership from team members. The roles and responsibilities chart identifies the type of behaviors associated with the reading program expected of each member. For example, the principal is charged with classroom supervisory observations, budget and administrative duties, and scheduling reading instruction.

Complete the following chart (Figure 2) on roles and responsibilities. Discuss with your team issues such as empowerment, collegiality, and the impact of leadership on the reading program.

Figure 2. Roles and Responsibilities Chart

Team Member	Leadership Role	Reading program responsibilities
(example) Mike Smith	Principal, ABC Elementary School	Classroom supervisory observations; budget and administrative duries; reading instruction scheduling

Sharing the team roles and responsibilities with the rest of the staff helps validate a collaborative model of inquiry and a model of leadership in which everyone is valued. Simple actions such as sharing the mission, vision, and roles can quell unrest among those not chosen to serve on the team. These actions also acknowledge the importance of serving as the voice of a constituency dedicated to teaching all children to read.

Stepping Stone 3: "School at a Glance"

A *boiler plate* or "School at a Glance" review can guide the task force's work. These informal tools often are used for grant writing, but are also a rich source of information that describes resources and student characteristics. Self-study is based on the premise that before initiating program reform, the staff needs to review "who we are and what we do."

A self-study leadership team charged with program analysis and reform must identify gaps between the program mission and student achievement. Program evaluation should engage staff in a reflective process that identifies barriers to student success and guides program redesign.

Once a self-study team is established, it should begin collecting pertinent data. The School at a Glance tool (Figure 3) directs the self-study team to review pertinent demographic data.

Figure 3. School at a Glance

Complete Figure 4 below with the most recent data about the number of students per grade classified as:

Figure 4. Classification of Students per Grade

Grade Level	Regular Education	Special Education	English Language Learners	Intensive Reading Instruction	Maximum Class Enrollment
Kindergarten					
First					
Second					
Third					

Type of kindergarten program   _____ full day   _____ half day

Total number of classroom teachers and licensed staff   _____

Number of paraprofessionals   _____

Administration (check all that apply):
       _____ Principal   _____ Assistant principal
       _____ Instructional coordinator   _____ Community liaison

How do school and student demographics impact the school reading program?

Educators tend to hold certain assumptions about how changes in the student body affect a school. There is significant concern at this time, for example, that new research is needed to determine how to teach students who are English language learners (Spellman, 2005). Economic, social, and transportation changes may alter the community that founded the school and these changes in turn may affect school culture dramatically.

Stepping Stone 4: Community Changes Change School Reading Programs

Stepping Stone 4 is a discussion stimulator for the self-study leadership team to consider the impact of community changes on the school reading program. Figure 5 is an example that builds a starting point for the Stepping Stone 4 questions that follow.

Figure 5. Scenarios and Questions for Stepping Stone 4

A small rural school has 89 elementary school children enrolled in Grades K–6. The community's economic base is agricultural with the majority of families living at lower income levels. Census data indicate a high rate of unemployment and the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey data show that 65 percent of families in the county are at the two lowest levels of literacy. The school is a Title I school that has not made AYP for the past three years on the state's standardized measure of third-grade achievement.

One day a developer successfully petitions a change in flood-plain status, and for the first time, homes and businesses can be erected on this land. The developer receives permits to a build a 1,000-home middle-income subdivision within the school district. Review the school demographics to complete the following items.

- What assumptions might be made about the language development and early literacy skills of children currently entering kindergarten?

- Based on these assumptions, what should be the focus of the current kindergarten language arts and early reading curriculum?

- How could the school administration plan for the projected impact of a large number of new students?

- Aside from needing more classrooms, what assumptions might the staff have about how the reading program will meet the needs of students with backgrounds that are different from the current student body?

- Similarly, what happens if the scenario were changed and the land is sold to a corporation planning to build a poultry processing plant?

- Discuss your responses with the team.

- What changes have occurred in your local community in the past decade?

- How did these changes impact the reading program?

- What were the effects of these changes on student achievement?

Chapter 3: Describe Existing Core Program

What lessons can be learned from other schools that adopted and implemented a new core program successfully or not?

New reading programs are difficult to implement within a compressed time frame. The Stepping Stones pilot study of 56 schools in their first year of a major funding initiative revealed that virtually all programs experienced transition stress during the first three months of implementation. Nearly all districts and buildings in the pilot study reported initial difficulties as they implemented a new reading program. Principals, literacy coaches, and teachers reported that program transition was challenging and stressful. Extensive time and energy were required to coordinate planning, professional development, scheduling, and basal implementation between the grant award in late spring and the start of school in August. Often, published materials arrived later than promised, which exacerbated an already demanding transition. In some of the schools, teachers were unpacking the new reading series near or after the first day of school.

Many schools in the pilot study had histories of numerous reading initiatives. A number of principals ruefully concluded that their school had created a patchwork quilt of programs within and across grade levels. This inconsistency of program design and instructional methodology made it very difficult to target and improve discrete curriculum defects and greatly contributed to the schools' failure to achieve AYP in reading.

Professional development sessions, usually bundled in two or three full days of inservice, were held during the summer and afterschool during the regular school year. Coaches and teachers had to acclimate to their new relationship while also adjusting to new schedules of time protected for daily reading instruction. One principal summed up the transition period: "My whole staff was involved in building a plane right after takeoff up in the sky. It was nerve wracking but exciting."

What worked, according to principals, coaches, and teachers interviewed during the pilot study, was a sense of everyone playing an important role on a team. A reading coach, formerly a teacher in the school for more than 20 years, stated:

> We all recognized the fact that some kind of intervention was needed to help us meet state standards for reading. Our teachers care deeply about our students' reading success and everyone really does their best. But honestly, we were never sure just what was the best way to teach all children within our classrooms. We needed a master plan, fresh materials, and lots of professional development to update what we need to know about how children learn to read.

A first-grade teacher concurred during an interview:

> At first, all of the scientific research we'd heard about seemed too much like college courses that never seemed to connect with actual teaching. We had to go to inservices about the three-tiered model of reading, then on to how to teach reading using the *LETRS* model [Moats & Foorman, 2003], then we had a session on assessment and wireless technology. The trainers kept telling us what the research says about how all of these strategies worked. What was different about the training was that we were taught exactly the way we were supposed to teach in our classrooms. Imagine a whole room of adults practicing phoneme manipulation out loud! The room was filled with sounds like, "/mmm/ /a/ /nnnn/: /man/."
>
> We were all bombarded with professional development. But, after a month or so, it seemed [that] if we just followed the core program the way it was designed, things got easier. Then when we met with the coach to discuss how we were doing, we had the weekly grade-level meetings to compare experiences. Her honest yet constructive feedback boosted our confidence. I'll be honest though, most teachers were not completely convinced that giving up all of their favorite materials and ways to teach [was a good idea] until they saw children's reading skills improve in ways that had not happened in the past. That's when the bells rang and the whistles blew!

These anecdotes reflect the critical role of professional development. Teachers must have a solid grasp of how children learn to read, especially those who struggle. This knowledge is essential for providing the intense instruction (e.g., additional learning, practice opportunities) needed by children with reading difficulties (Torgesen, 2002).

A number of lessons were learned from the pilot study, including transition from a familiar curriculum and habitual teaching practices to new materials and instructional designs is challenging and stressful. While such transition engages teachers in professional development that is heavily steeped in references to scientific research, many teachers reported that constant references by presenters to "the research" was daunting at first. However, the connections made in every professional development session between the research and classroom teaching of reading's big concepts was given high marks by attendees. According to a teacher interviewed:

> Keeping abreast of the new research with all of those formal terms for teaching was quite a stretch when we were all busy trying to make sense of what to do with the children on a typical Tuesday morning during reading. It's a good thing every session had a bridge between the research and concrete ways to teach each of the big concepts about reading.

Another point to consider: During the pilot study, we learned that for some schools, having a core program was an entirely new curriculum design. In fact, data collecters found that schools using a basal program for the first time reported the most difficulties. Those with a core program previously in place and having prior professional development in scientifically based reading research or instruction reported far fewer transition problems.

Transition to a new core program is a systemwide challenge best achieved when there is complete teacher buy-in to adopting the program in its original published state. Adherence to the core program design means following the teacher manual as well as practicing reading instruction on a daily basis according to the design presented during professional development. Program fidelity is enhanced when teachers can learn by watching coaches model new strategies in their classrooms. Student achievement is promoted by careful study of performance monitoring that informs instructional decision making.

Stepping Stone 5: Program in Practice—State of the Current Reading Program

Describe the key elements of your elementary school core reading program. (Refer to the administrative guide of the commercially published program[s].)

Key Elements. Describe the school's vision of how teachers and students benefit from a high-quality reading program.

Is there a consistent grade level schedule for daily reading instruction?   ____ Yes ____ No
(*Attach a copy of the daily schedule)*

Does the school have a policy mandating the number of minutes
of protected reading instruction per day?   ____ Yes ____ No

- Number of minutes of protected reading instruction per day: ____

Instructional Materials (i.e., core program, basal series).
- New core program?   ____ Yes ____ No

   ⊙ Adoption Date   _____

- Core program consistently employed by all teachers at each
  grade level?   ____ Yes ____ No

If the response is "no" for each grade level, use Figure 6 to identify the types of program based instruction used by teachers.

Figure 6. Program Guided Instruction per Grade or Teacher

Grade	Core Program (Publisher)	Program (Publisher) + Teacher-Selected Literature and Texts; Software From Core	Eclectic Mix of Published Materials From Different Programs	Children's Literature, Textbooks; Teacher-Designed Curriculum
Grade K				
Grade 1				
Grade 2				
Grade 3				

Publishers provided training for the core program?   ____ Yes ____ No

When? Date(s)   _____

Who attended?	_____ All classroom teachers	_____ K–3
	_____ Special education	_____ Title I
	_____ Literacy coach	_____ Volunteers
	_____ Curriculum coordinator	_____ Paraprofessional(s)
	_____ Principal	

Attendance was not mandatory due to the late adoption. Teachers who attended were given a stipend.

Supplemental program training?   ____ Yes ____ No

When? Date(s)   _____

Who attended?	_____ All classroom teachers	_____ K–3
	_____ Special education	_____ Title I
	_____ Literacy coach	_____ Volunteers
	_____ Curriculum coordinator	_____ Paraprofessional(s)
	_____ Principal	

What program is used for intensive intervention?   _____

Core program integration with special education?   ____ Yes ____ No

Does the program have one or more reading or literacy coaches
whose contractual obligations are solely dedicated to working
across all grade levels to facilitate reading instruction?   ____ Yes ____ No

While there is a literacy coach, her responsibilities are not focused solely on working across all grade levels to facilitate reading. At times, she is used as a quasi administrator and handles discipline.

Were barriers to implementing core program identified?   ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, please briefly describe the primary barriers.

Adequate Yearly Progress

Did the school achieve AYP in reading and communication arts last year? ____ Yes ____ No

What grade level(s) achieved AYP?   ___ K ___ 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5

How does the administration address grade level failure to achieve AYP?

How does the administration respond to state standards for third-grade reading achievement?

Stepping Stone 6: Status of the Core Reading Program

Describe the key elements of your elementary school core reading program. Start by filling in the Figure 7 on the Daily Schedule for Reading Instruction.

Figure 7. Daily Schedule for Reading Instruction

Grade level (or per class if not consistent)	Daily Schedule for Reading Instruction	Total Minutes Per Week
Kindergarten		
First		
Second		
Third		

Use Figure 8 to evaluate the status of your reading program.

Figure 8. Status of the Core Reading Program

Component	Highly Effective	Moderately Effective	Marginally Effective	Not Effective	Comments
Core program					
Supplemental program					
Coaching model					
Stable daily schedule for uninterrupted reading in all grade levels					
Special education integrated with classroom core program					
Ongoing, standardized assessment (e.g., DIBELS)					
Student achievement data regularly reviewed by teachers and principal together					
Appropriate professional development provided by the publisher					
Program fidelity					
Use of state standards for reading achievement (third grade)					

Stepping Stone 7: Reflective Practices

Review the data from the Stepping Stone 7 to respond to the following items.

- To what degree is the current program in practice a reflection of the values espoused by the self-study leadership team about student reading achievement?

- To what degree is the current reading program an effective vehicle for driving the school reading mission?

- Why are you in the position of needing to evaluate your reading program? What are you doing that does not work? What are your top priorities for changes?

Chapter 4: Instructional Leadership

What does research say about connections between instructional leadership and strong reading programs?

Leadership is critical to the success of any program reform or initiative. Effective leadership in a reading program means being involved with teachers in their classrooms. A principal's involvement includes keeping "an eye on the prize" by focusing on reading achievement as the school's top priority and removing barriers to that goal.

Principals can do this, in part, by making sure that teachers have the resources, time, and support to plan, practice, and reflect on the reading program. Instructional leadership also is exercised effectively when objective data is used to target the nature and extent of the support needed by teachers, which can then be provided at the peer, grade, coaching, or administrative levels.

Why is the principal's role as instructional leader crucial to the reading program?

Research findings underscore the importance of instructional leadership. Principals who promote student achievement through their influence on features of the schoolwide learning climate are perceived as strong leaders by their teachers (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996). Leadership by a person with persistent—and consistent—vision is evident when all of the instructional staff maintain a clear focus on reading and work together to bring about significant improvements in reading instruction. In fact, the principal should be prepared to manage how disputes with teachers about program changes are resolved.

Instructional leadership was examined during the pilot study: Principals, coaches, and teachers were interviewed to probe the extent to which leadership was a critical attribute of program reform. According to one of the observer's site reports:

> The principal, Mrs. Shell, has taken the lead in moving forward with the new reading program. She frequently visits classrooms during the 90-minute reading blocks and regularly meets with the literacy coach. She also meets with everyone to discuss progress to date and potential problems.

Mrs. Shell, herself, reported:
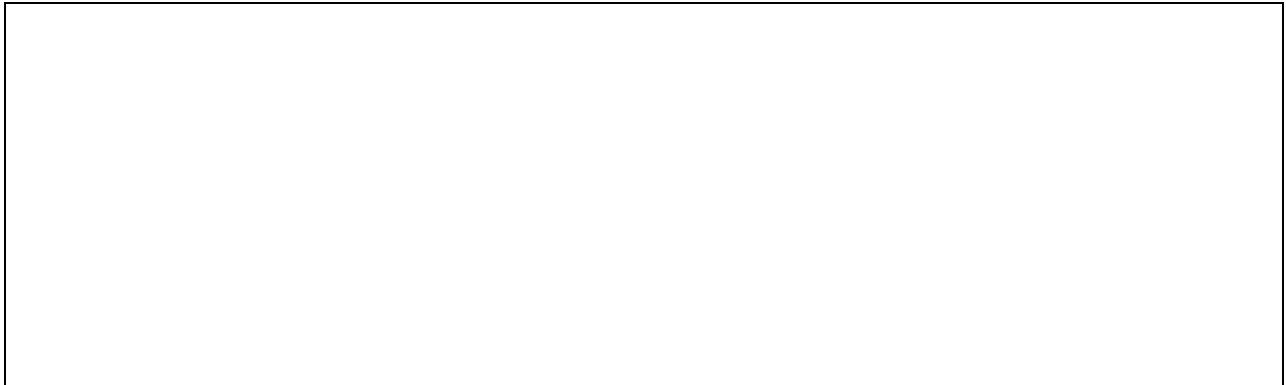
> Reading is the focus of the district, and I'm responsible for setting the tone for the building. I do this by actively participating in professional development, attending monthly grade-level meetings, and by working side by side with the coach whenever difficulties arise before getting to a crisis mode. I'm proud of the progress we've made this year and, like the rest of the staff, am very enthusiastic about the future of our reading program.

How did the principals in the pilot study handle the new reading program and still attend to the rest of their responsibilities?

Principals in the pilot study were challenged when their school adopted a new program because they also were charged with coordinating planning, professional development, scheduling, and basal implementation within a schedule that includes other content areas, recess, lunch time, and special activities. They were very busy yet very organized. The reading initiative grounded the rest of the schedule, especially for Grades K–3. Principals reported some conflict with the fourth- and fifth-grade teachers feeling left out of something really important. Many sought additional funding to ensure program transition for the next year even though the fourth and fifth grades are not officially part of the grant-funded reading program.

Stepping Stone 8: Graphic Organizer of Decision Making in Support of Reading Program Goals

Assume you are seeking clarity about decision making for a school reading program. You might construct a chart in the box below that represents the instructional leadership of the school reading program.

Then write a brief narrative explaining how instructional leadership guides the school's reading program.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

When the goal is to make systematic changes, program evaluation involves a great deal of decision making. The pilot study revealed powerful evidence that program reform is connected with teachers' decisions to buy in to the effort, which is no surprise. However, applicants for the state grants had to explain how they would motivate their teachers to buy in to the program and then to document the extent to which teachers actually had participated in the program versus the degree of commitment stated in the grant application.

While all schools in the pilot study noted "buy-in" by the majority of teachers, many reported a minority of teachers with initial resistance to change. Most initial resistance seemingly centered on implementing new teaching pedagogy and uncertainty surrounding the role of the coach in the classroom (i.e., instructional support and training versus performance evaluator). There is anecdotal evidence that initial resistance to change was more prevalent among veteran teachers than those with less experience. Some principals mentioned that first-year teachers expressed the most enthusiasm about a brand-new reading program.

Conversely, schools that reported a smoother transition period noted that many teachers were involved early on in various grant-preparation activities. They helped with developing the consumers' guide, grant writing, reviewing potential basal programs, and schedule planning. Teachers' decisions to buy in were obvious by the volume of room decorations, such as motivational slogans celebrating reading, ample samples of students' writing displayed in the classroom and hallways, and participation in teacher-led family activities to promote the reading program.

Stepping Stone 9: Reflective Practice: Decision Making

Reflect on the state of your reading program as it functions today and the communications and decision-making processes that got it here. Discuss the following questions with the self-study leadership team.

- Does information about how decisions are made and the impact of these decisions flow in a smooth and timely manner?

- Do some teachers express frustration that they are the "last to know" about programmatic decisions that affect their practice?

- How are disputes regarding issues such as teacher buy-in to research-driven changes in reading program design resolved?

Is the leadership design:

- Autocratic (principal makes all of the decisions regarding scheduling, student placement in supplemental, and intensive programs)? _____ Yes _____ No

- Layered so there is one representative or liaison per grade level between teachers and the administration? _____ Yes _____ No

- Committee or task-force driven? _____ Yes _____ No

- Dependent on other factors such as long-standing job responsibilities held by particular staff? _____ Yes _____ No

Stepping Stone 10: Analysis of Effective Decision Making

As discussed, many constructs are inherent in leadership and decision making. Implementing a core program involves a number of variables. Figure 9 helps the self-study team reflect on how well each construct functions within the reading program.

Figure 9. Reflection on Construct Functions in the Reading Program

Staff	Highly Effective	Moderately Effective	Minimally Effective	Not Allowed
Senior district administrator supports building-level collaborative decisions.				
Principal uses data to support teachers.				
Principal has open-door policy to encourage input for decision making.				
Literacy coach uses data to target teachers' support needs.				
Teachers had an option whether to buy in to to the new program.				
Teachers made instructional decisions based on data.				
Decision making is limited to the principal.				
Special education shares resources, attends grade-level meetings, and participates in instructional planning.				
Decision making is a collaborative, reflective process.				
Once a significant decision is made, there is a plan to assess the impact of it on student achievement.				

Comments:

Suggestions for change: _____

Person leading the change effort: _____

Timeline (Dates): _____

Stepping Stone 11: Decision Making for Program Improvement

Review the Stepping Stones with the self-study leadership team during a meeting that focuses exclusively on instructional leadership.

Do the principal and members of the team have sufficient time and expertise to provide leadership?

> If not, how can the leadership team address this barrier to effective reading-program implementation?

Do the leaders identified by the self-study team have clearly defined duties and responsibilities to ensure effective implementation of a comprehensive reading program?

> If not, how can the leadership team address this barrier to effective reading-program implementation?

What is the district's policy for new program or curriculum implementation that includes:

- Training for principals, building leaders, and local education agency personnel in the essential components of reading instruction?
- How these components apply to instructional programs, implementation processes, and progress monitoring?

Is the district's policy reflected by the Leadership Stepping Stones?

> If not, how can the leadership team address this barrier to effective reading-program implementation?

Chapter 5: Time Management

What amount of time for reading instruction did the National Reading Panel recommend be forged out of each school day?

Scientifically based reading programs demand time to plan, implement, and evaluate the impact of daily instruction. When reading achievement is the top priority for school improvement, teachers must have an ample block of uninterrupted time for daily instruction. The National Reading Panel recommended *at least* 90 minutes per day of protected time devoted to reading instruction (National Reading Panel, 2000). Stepping Stones strongly recommends that all supplemental and intervention instruction be in addition to this time.

A principal interviewed during the Stepping Stones pilot study shared a story about how everyone was tuned in to protect the 90-minute reading block. Mrs. Sullivan said:

> A reporter from the local newspaper came to interview our staff about our new reading program. She was working on a deadline and wanted to take pictures of children in the first grade. She was greeted at the classroom door by a student who said, "You can't come in and interrupt us right now because it is our reading time. Please come back at 10 o'clock.

How can schools schedule large blocks of protected time for uninterrupted reading instruction?

Most schools in the pilot study preferred scheduling reading blocks during morning hours. In larger and shared-teacher schools, exclusive morning reading blocks could not be scheduled because coaches would be unable to participate in the 90-minute reading block on a weekly basis as stipulated in their grant. Schools faced with this dilemma generally moved some reading blocks to early afternoon to meet the coaching requirement.

Many larger schools—defined as having more than three teachers per grade level—in the pilot study schedule common times for teachers to collaborate and plan collectively. Small-school principals, coaches, and teachers usually met more informally but also more frequently. Most had daily interactions among all parties in addition to regular staff meetings.

What about protecting time on a regular basis for teacher's time to plan together?

Collaboration is a key feature of effective schoolwide reading programs (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000) and working together takes time. Regular weekly opportunities to talk about reading and instruction with other teachers were supported enthusiastically by teachers and coaches in the pilot study. In fact, a standardized schedule for grade-level planning is critical. But all teachers need time with peers, coaches, or consultants who can support their practice. They also need time to observe other teachers, share instructional strategies, and reflect on feedback.

Stepping Stone 12: Time Management

Review the time categories in Figure 10 with the self-study leadership team during a meeting that focuses exclusively on time management.

Figure 10. Time Management

Adequate Time Allocated	Highly Effective	Moderately Effective	Minimally Effective
Teacher professional development			
Adequate time for teachers to learn new concepts and practice what they learn			
Instructional planning (collaborative and individual during the day)			
Assessment (progress monitoring, end of level, standardized)			
Literacy coaching (modeling, resource sharing, feedback, planning)			
Principal supervision (formal, informal, feedback and support)			
Uninterrupted block of daily reading (minimum 90 minutes)			
Additional opportunities daily for supplemental instruction			
Additional opportunities daily for intervention instruction			

Comments:

Team Reflection on Time Management

- In what ways does time management enhance teacher effectiveness? If it is a barrier to program success, please explain.

  _____

  _____

  _____

- How does time management impact program quality?

  _____

  _____

  _____

- What steps are needed to ensure adequate time for planning, assessment, and reflection?

  _____

  _____

  _____

Suggestions for change: _____
_____
_____
_____

Person leading the change effort: _____

Timeline (Dates):   _____

Chapter 6: School Climate

What is "school climate" and how does it impact reading achievement?

School climate and culture refer to the sum of the values, cultures, safety practices, and organizational structures within a school that cause it to function and react in particular ways. Although the two terms are somewhat interchangeable, school climate concerns the school's effects on students while school culture refers more to the way teachers and other staff members work together (McBrien & Brandt, 1997).

Moos (1979) defines school climate as the social atmosphere of a setting or "learning environment" (p. 81) in which students have different experiences, depending upon the protocols set up by the teachers and administrators. Some schools visited during the pilot felt comfortable and inviting from the moment the observers entered the building. They met enthusiastic teachers, staff, and students during the building tour. The hallways and classrooms were attired attractively in student photos, work samples, school spirit slogans, all of which contributed to a pleasing effect and strong sense of membership in a nurturing community. Rarely did a data collector have to initiate conversation about the reading program. Everyone was well aware of the purpose of the visit and prepared to share success stories. The positive climate stimulated initial impressions that the school puts a premium on respect for students, embraces diversity, and promotes personal development for all.

The observers also spent time in schools where there was an uncomfortable effect created by sarcastic remarks by staff about underachievers, a professed lack of respect for the families of some children, and the strong singular feel of an authoritarian institution. During individual interviews with coaches and teachers there were frequent "off the record" comments about feeling a lack of empowerment, overt cynicism, failure to affiliate with other teachers or the administrator, and friction with parents. Not surprisingly, these schools struggled through the transition process.

Stepping Stone 13: School Climate

Review the Stepping Stones data with the self-study leadership team, then use that data to fill in Figure 11 to discuss how school climate contributes to the success of the reading program.

Figure 11. School Climate

Criteria	Highly Effective	Moderately Effective	Minimally Effective
Principal sets positive tone about program change.			
Principal supports the literacy coach.			
Principal supports teachers to practice new teaching strategies.			
Teachers have positive contact with principal daily.			
Teachers are accountable to high standards for student achievement.			
There is a strong sense of a community effort to achieve reading success.			
There is reading program buy-in by all teachers.			
No minority group of dissenters impedes program development.			
Teachers feel connected with the principal in a united effort.			
The literacy coach is accepted by all teachers.			
Teachers reflect on and implement coaching feedback.			
Students are respected, regardless of reading achievement.			
Interior space is designed to highlight students as the top priority.			
Visitors are welcomed by office staff, and rules for observations made clear.			

Comments: _____
_____
_____

Reflection

- Choose three words that best characterize your school's climate today.

  _____

- What factors appear to have the strongest connections with the current school climate?

  _____
  _____
  _____

- What factors seem to have the weakest relationship with the current school climate?

  _____
  _____
  _____

- What teacher comments in the Stepping Stone table data suggest that this school's climate is a barrier to a fully functioning, nurturing, and positive learning environment?

  _____
  _____
  _____

- What action steps are needed to remove any barriers to sustaining a positive school climate?

  _____
  _____
  _____

- Consider to whom to delegate the effort to remove these barriers?

  _____
  _____
  _____

- Consider who will lead the effort to remove these barriers and consider a timeline for action steps leading to these changes.

  _____
  _____
  _____

Chapter 7: Professional Development

Why do teachers need professional development? Don't they all know how to teach reading?

All children deserve to be taught by highly qualified teachers, and all teachers merit high-quality professional development. The principal is responsible for ensuring that all teachers, regardless of certification credentials or years of experience, continuously engage in professional development that is aligned with the reading program. It is futile to attempt to reform a school reading program from the "top down" by just adopting a program and telling teachers to "teach it by the book" because teachers "teach from what they know" (Darling-Hammond, 1990, pp. 235–236). Professional development that effectively enhances teacher knowledge and practice is an essential support of school improvement policies.

Schools in the pilot study that experienced the least stress during transition reported that their principals regularly attended professional development sessions on reading. Effective professional development mandates extended time for initial training that includes discussion of scientifically based reading research on how children learn to read as well as specific instructional strategies. It also involves extensive in-class follow-up (Learning First Alliance, 2000).

Can professional development actually change the way teachers practice?

In a recent study of professional development (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001), teachers reported two elements that had the greatest impact on their knowledge and skills that led to changes in their instructional practice. The first was a focus on content knowledge. The second was coherence, which involves building on what teachers already know. Professional development has to help teachers align content with state and district standards and assessment. Coaches support teachers by encouraging them to reflect with other teachers about how they apply this new information to strengthen their instructional practice.

The International Reading Association takes the position that every teacher must receive quality preparation in all aspects of research-based reading pedagogy. The International Reading Association identified the following standards that should be met by beginning teachers:

- Foundational knowledge and dispositions:
  - ⊙ Know how reading develops.
  - ⊙ Know how oral language helps students acquire written language.
  - ⊙ Know how to read research reports and appropriately adapt classroom practices to match research evidence.

- Instructional strategies and curriculum materials:

  ⊙ Know how to select curriculum materials and help students learn how letter-sound relationships work.

  ⊙ Know how to teach students to make sense out of the texts they read.

  ⊙ Know how to develop strategic readers and writers.

  ⊙ Know how to match curriculum materials to students' needs and levels of competence.

- Assessment, diagnosis, and evaluation:

  ⊙ Know how to assess the progress of every student and change instruction when it is not working.

  ⊙ Know how to communicate results of assessments to various stakeholders, especially parents.

- Creating a literate environment:

  ⊙ Know how to set up, organize, and manage a classroom so that students can and will learn to read.

  ⊙ Know how to motivate students to do their best work (International Reading Association, 2003, p. 1).

The self-study leadership team easily could take this list of teachers' knowledge standards and create a self-assessment survey for teachers. The checklist should include space for notations about demonstrations of knowledge in practice. If a teacher says he knows how to create a literate environment, a member of the study team or a coach could follow up the survey with a classroom visit. The two could review the room using Stepping Stone 18: Literacy Environment to confirm the self-assessment. Such follow-up presents a fresh opportunity for feedback and collaboration.

Results of the teachers' knowledge survey could be analyzed by grade level as well as by individual teachers to inform planning for professional development. Each of the categories also can be addressed by the coach during reading instruction through modeling and resource sharing.

What forms of professional development really make a difference in classroom instruction?

Professional development is effective when embedded in a strategic, systematic professional development plan that prepares teachers in all of the essential components of reading instruction. It should include information on instructional materials, programs, and strategies based on scientifically based reading research. High-quality professional development actively engages teachers in planning, skills, and information through time. The goal also is to enhance teachers' ability to implement early intervention and remediation programs. Professional development is also essential to facilitate teachers' use of assessment data to drive their instruction.

Some types of activities to consider in providing high-quality professional development are the following:

- Grade-level collaboration for instructional planning and assessment analysis.

- Content-area collaboration for instructional planning and assessment analysis.

- Specialization-area collaboration for instructional planning and assessment analysis.

- Modeling.

- Peer coaching.

- Book study groups.

- Vertical teaming.

- Action research and sharing of findings.

Program-specific training prepares teachers to implement the chosen core, supplemental, and/or intervention programs—of which they will have had ample warning and perhaps have participated in the evaluations and choices in the previous year. Usually, professional development on core programs takes place during the summer so teachers can begin the school year with updated knowledge and skills about instruction.

What did you learn in the pilot study about professional development?

The majority of 56 schools in the study were committed firmly to professional development. Districts covered the costs for staff to attend training programs prior to implementing the new program and also to support professional development throughout the year. Most districts mandated ongoing professional development on at least a monthly basis. Professional development was frequently held after regular school hours, on Saturdays, and during staff and grade-level meetings.

A survey on scientifically based reading research professional development brought responses from administrators, coaches, and teachers. They valued sessions grounded in theory that were also rich with explicit detail on how to transfer content knowledge to practice. Teachers also looked for clear directions as to how to implement strategies in ways that meet students' diverse learning needs.

The professional development survey data also pointed out what educators disdain. Respondents—again, no surprise—were frustrated by dull, dry content presented in a seemingly disorganized, disjointed manner that confused rather than illuminated solid instructional techniques.

Survey respondents strongly endorsed well-prepared presentations coupled with informative feedback and follow-up from the presenters. They were supportive of a train-the-trainers model in which teachers and the reading coach attended sessions. Later, the coach supported the teachers in their classrooms as they implemented content. Teachers praised professional development followed by frequent opportunities to ask questions and discuss new ideas. Many stated that they valued time for reflection after training, opportunities to demonstrate new

instructional strategies—especially when coupled with opportunities for critiques—and collegial planning with a literacy coach.

While most teachers annually shun the bandwagon of "what's new this year" for inservice content, how do professional development needs change through time?

At the end of the first year of the pilot study, teachers, coaches and principals completed a survey to identify the content priorities for the upcoming school year. From teachers, the most frequent request was for information about differentiated instruction. They also wanted examples of literacy workstations and information about placing students in these stations based on the progress benchmarks. The coaches and principals responded to the survey by requesting opportunities to study test-score data analysis and how to implement application to reading program variables. They also wanted to learn how to plan subsequent professional development and budgeting based on student performance by grade level for each of the key areas of reading.

Stepping Stone 14: Professional Development

Professional development, especially in support of a schoolwide reading program, should be delivered to all players—not just teachers—because the coordination of training, objectives, and assessments requires cross-participation. The self-study leadership team should measure and evaluate all of these factors.

How does the administration encourage and support the ongoing professional development of the literacy coach?

_____
_____

What happens after teachers attend reading-related professional development?

- Time to debrief or reflect with the literacy coach   _____ Yes   _____ No

- Grade-level meetings with reading focus   _____ Yes   _____ No

- Teachers produce documentation or reflections of
  "lessons learned"   _____ Yes   _____ No

How are recommendations for instructional practice prescribed by the professional development provider implemented and evaluated?

_____
_____
_____

How does the administration encourage support of the ongoing scientifically based reading research-based professional development of the teachers?

_____
_____
_____

To what extent does the building administrator engage in scientifically based reading research-based professional development?

_____
_____
_____

Use Figure 12 to foster team discussion of professional development effectiveness across grade levels.

Figure 12. Professional Development Effectiveness

Level	Highly Effective	Moderately Effective	Marginally Effective	Not Effective	Comments
K (N =) All teachers engaged					
1 (N =) All teachers engaged					
2 (N =) All teachers engaged					
3 (N =) All teachers engaged					
Literacy coach regularly attends district- and state-sponsored professional development.					
On-site scientifically based reading research-based professional development occurs at least four times per year.					
All teachers attend one scientifically based reading research-based professional development opportunity aligned with the school's reading mission during the summer.					
Principal encourages all teachers to attend regional- and state-sponsored professional development opportunities.					
Principal provides appropriate compensation for professional development.					
Principal encourages teachers to reflect on and practice new skills.					

Level	Highly Effective	Moderately Effective	Marginally Effective	Not Effective	Comments
Principal sponsors membership in professional reading society for self or faculty member.					
Literacy coach supports teacher practice of new skills in the classroom.					
Teachers share professional development lessons learned during staff meetings.					
Building has professional resources (e.g., literature, media) collection available for loan.					
Other:					

Comments: _____
_____
_____

Suggestions for change: _____
_____
_____

Person leading the change effort: _____

Timeline (Dates):   _____

Chapter 8: Principal Classroom Supervisory Observation

There are so many ways for principals to observe teachers. Are daily "walk throughs" sufficient for them to get a handle on the reading program, or must they have more structured and formal systems for observing reading instruction?

Principals bear the administrative responsibility for ensuring that all teachers' actions, judgments, and decisions are in the best educational interests of students and support optimum learning. They are also responsible for facilitating quality improvement through each teacher's careerlong professional growth.

Ms. Jung, a principal in the pilot study, expressed her conviction that understanding how the core program is designed to work is essential for being able to determine whether a lesson is taught effectively:

> When I walk into a classroom during reading time, it's obvious to me within minutes whether the teacher is being effective or not. This is because I can identify which component or reading concept of our core program that (according to the lesson plan) is supposed to be addressed. I know the program, and I know how it *should* look in practice. But when I'm sitting there watching the teacher and if I cannot identify "it" then I'm sure that the kids can't either. That's when it's clear that the lesson is not an optimal learning experience. I take notes and mentally prepare for a follow-up conference to help get the teacher back on track.

This example connects the principal with understanding good reading instruction as it correlates with a specific program design. It also demonstrates how principals need to use observation data to help teachers improve their practice. Numerous clinical models of classroom observation are aimed at helping school administrators improve their reading programs. McNergney and Carrier (1981) describe a five-step process: preplanning, preconference, observation, analysis of data, and postconference. Principals are guided by this model to attend to behavior as a function of the person's interaction with others within a given environment when doing specific tasks. Feedback from an observer needs to address all of these variables.

The Stepping Stones Appendix is a teacher observation guide designed for principals and reading coaches to use to document the types of teacher and student behaviors observed during a single lesson. Principals are directed to establish a time for the observation with a teacher. At this time, the principal reiterates the purpose of the observation and shares the observation guide. For example, the principal can say:

> I reviewed your most recent scores from the progress monitoring. Your records show that you have targeted these five children for strategic instruction during the 90-minute protected block of reading. I'm interested in seeing how these children function within both large- and small-group settings. I'll note my observations during a 10- to 30-minute observation that will happen at some point during your regular reading block. Then I'll reflect on my notes later this morning and the two of us can talk about your lesson right after school."

Stepping Stone 15: Principal Classroom Supervisory Observation

Complete Figure 13 to determine how the principal's classroom supervisory visits impact the reading program.

Figure 13. Principal Classroom Supervisory Observations

Criteria	Highly Effective	Moderately Effective	Marginally Effective	Not Effective
Teachers had input to performance criteria aligned with core.				
Regular reading schedule was posted outside each class.				
Learning environment was assessed.				
Principal knows students' levels (Tier 3)				
Principal stays for 90-minute block (Tier 1)				
Principal stays for 30-minute block (Tiers 1, Tier 2)				
Principal observes teacher working with the coach.				
Principal refrains from making any comments during observation.				
Principal makes accurate notes and check list annotations.				
Principal confers with teacher by the end of the next working day.				
Principal provides teacher with a written report during the conference.				

*Attach any instruments used for teacher observation—see Appendix.

Comments: _____
_____
_____

Suggestions for change: _____
_____
_____

Person leading the change effort: _____

Timeline (Dates):   _____

(See the Appendix for the recommended Principal's Observation Instrument.)

Chapter 9: Student Assessment

What are the most pressing issues about assessing children's reading abilities?

The national education agenda calls for accurate measures of children's reading proficiencies and that, when measured, children's competencies meet state standards for performance. The field of psycho-educational testing has evolved rapidly in response to findings by the National Reading Panel (2000) that by understanding constructs closely related to reading acquisition, actual reading difficulties can be prevented. The goal is to replace "scatter shot" informal assessments with "laser beam" specific analyses of each child's facility with discrete reading constructs. The intended consequence of this premise is that teachers will practice assessment-driven, systematic, direct, and explicit instruction. This bold conclusion mandates assessment across various developmental domains to identify children at risk and then use assessment results to guide reading instruction. From this, teachers can promote student achievement by their use of that data to inform their decisions about how to teach.

Why do there seem to be more and more reading tests included in a basal or core program package that go beyond traditional, informal end-of-unit tests?

In the past decade, numerous and varied reading tests have been made commercially available in addition to the assessment packages included in core programs. More skills and constructs are being assessed, especially language and literacy concepts (Pearson, Sensale, Vyas, & Kim, 1998). This has confounded teachers' work by calling for more judgments and interpretations of student responses, the need to devote more time and facility to testing as a whole. Three thematic changes to reading instruction seem to be driving these changes: emergent literacy, process writing approaches, and performance assessments throughout the curriculum (Paris & Hoffman, 2004).

What is a reading assessment framework?

Assessment tools fall into four categories: screening, diagnostic, classroom-based, and outcomes. Scores identify students' current standing in the reading program. Scores from screening and diagnostic tests identify which students are struggling and what skill needs are unmet. Classroom monitoring informs teachers about the general effectiveness of the program as currently implemented by tracking student outcomes. Data also guide decisions by identifying model students and pinpointing what works with skill-related instruction.

What are the primary implications of assessment data?

At the school level, student outcomes data inform program planners as they prioritize their plans for instruction and intervention, professional development, and budgeting (Roberts & Fiala, 2004). A team comprising the principal, curriculum director, reading coach, and selected teachers dedicated to data analysis can determine what is working and what needs attention. A trend analysis across classrooms and grade levels can determine staffing needs, professional development priorities, and teachers' capacity and commitment to the reading program.

At the classroom level, student data identify students' areas of strength and need and are used to group students for instruction and intervention. For example, given a set of low scores on measures of fluency, a teacher can decide to establish a small group of students who meet daily during the 90-minute block to receive additional instruction and have time for more practice of oral reading.

How can a self-study leadership team begin to think about assessment data?

If the team is studying assessment data in terms of school or classroom levels, the most important thing for them to remember is to create a clear, logical chain between problem solving and decision making. Start the discussion by asking the team to examine the assessment data for all students in a single classroom. Can every team member identify which students successfully have achieved grade-level standards and benchmarks? Which students experience moderate difficulty with specific skills and concepts? Are members of the team able to determine the skills and concepts with which most students struggle? If so, what changes need to be made to improve reading achievement in these areas? To ensure that the school's teachers thoroughly understand how to make these changes to their practice, what professional development or assistance is needed? This is a logical model that links performance outcomes with the resources needed to meet expectations.

However, the process of assessment analysis should not begin and end with the self-study leadership team. Grade-level meetings are essential after these changes are made for teachers to have opportunities to discuss data implications, changes in instruction, curriculum gaps, resource needs, and observations of student performance (Consortium of Reading Excellence Inc., 2003).

How does a leadership team go about making such a decision about adopting one standardized instrument for schoolwide reading assessment?

Selecting an appropriate instrument is a serious undertaking best led by someone who has solid expertise in reading diagnosis and educational assessment. If the school staff is small and limited to only a principal and classroom teachers, district, regional, or state technical assistance is warranted. Essentially, there are various criteria for selecting measures. Rathvon (2004) identified four criteria for selection of measures:

- Designed to assess the reading or reading-related skills of children in kindergarten, first grade, or second grade.

- Potential or demonstrated utility in predicting reading acquisition and/or identifying early reading problems.

- Adequate psychometric properties.

- Adequate usability (pp. 2–3).

There are many other factors to consider, including whether teachers can administer paperless assessments using wireless technologies. All teachers in the pilot study were trained to assess students using an instrument loaded onto a palm pilot. They administered the assessment, synchronized their handheld devices with a computer linked to the database, and had almost immediate test results so paper printouts with normative comparisons of students' performance were available for classroom planning.

Stepping Stone 16: Evaluate Teacher Use of Student Assessment

Do all teachers regularly assess student progress in reading? _____ Yes _____ No

Do teachers use electronic technology for student assessment? _____ Yes _____ No

- What, if any, problems persist with using the electronic technology for assessment?

_____
_____

How do teachers interpret standardized scores (e.g., DIBELS) for grouping students for instruction?

_____
_____
_____

How does the literacy coach use standardized scores (e.g., DIBELS) to support effective classroom instruction and use of resources?

_____
_____
_____

How often does the principal review grade-level student reading-achievement progress?

_____
_____
_____

In what ways do classroom reading-achievement scores impact teachers?

_____
_____
_____

How are parents informed about their children's reading progress?

_____
_____
_____

Stepping Stone 17: How Student Assessment Informs Decision Making

The principal should complete Figure 14 on student assessment and discuss with the team how student assessment informs instruction- and program-related decision making.

Figure 14. Student Assessment

Criteria	Highly Effective	Moderately Effective	Marginally Effective	Not Effective	Comments
Teachers administer progress monitoring and benchmark assessments.					
Annual baseline standardized reading scores inform instruction.					
Teacher confers with coach and/or principal regarding students not making adequate progress.					
Global standardized instruments are used for assessment and are aligned with individualized instruction.					
There is supplemental program assessment.					
A sample of student work is compared with standardized measures.					
Core program assessments correlate with standardized measures.					
Benchmarks determine placement in instructional groups.					
Flexible small groups are determined by students' subscores and profiles.					

Comments: _____
_____
_____

Targets for Improvement: _____
_____

Chapter 10:
Literacy Learning Environment

What is a literacy rich learning environment?

Schools serve as learning environments for young children. An environment in which children are surrounded by written materials and literacy activities encourages and facilitates their language and literacy development (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000). Literacy-rich environments created throughout the school foster and support children's enjoyment and appreciation for reading and books. Classrooms, the administrative office, and hallways have ample wall space to display children's written work and motivational slogans and reminders about core values that frame the school's literacy mission. Such positive reinforcement helps create a pleasant and inviting atmosphere.

The literacy environment includes more than print artifacts and tools. Appropriate lighting and space for comfortable seating arrangements for small groups, pairs, and individuals to enjoy reading and practice new skills all contribute to an environment conducive to literacy learning. Another valuable reinforcement is to create literacy-rich classrooms by ensuring that all of them are well stocked with a variety of attractively displayed genres and text formats, including works created by students.

Stepping Stone 18: Literacy Environment Evaluation

Conduct an environmental print tour of the building to complete the following Literacy Environment checklists.

Figure 15. Literacy Environment Checklist: Building Print Environment

Figure 16. Literacy Environment Checklist: Classroom Print Environment

Figure 17. Literacy Environment Checklist: Classroom Environmental Design

Targets for change: _____

_____

Resources needed to make changes: _____

_____

_____

Timeline (Dates): _____

Chapter 11: School-to-Home Communication to Involve Parents

How does NCLB address parental involvement?

The NCLB Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2005) respects parents as their children's first teachers and affirms their critical role in the formal education of their child. NCLB also empowers parents to make choices regarding the selection of supplemental services when their local school does not adequately meet the needs of their children. Parents must learn what state literacy standards mean in terms of the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes their children are expected to develop. Helping parents understand their rights under NCLB can strengthen the school's reading program. School-to-home communication is one vehicle for providing parents with the materials and training to support their children's achievement.

NCLB recognizes that all parents need sufficient literacy skills to understand their children's progress. The law requires states to give parents easy-to-read, detailed reports on schools and districts that tell them which ones are succeeding and why. This lets parents know whether their school is performing well for all children. The law was intended as a lifeline for parents that allow them to make choices about continued enrollment in low-performing schools and options for supplemental services.

Title I and other educational initiatives acknowledge the value of parent involvement in promoting high standards for children's achievement. Unfortunately, in Title I public schools, nearly two thirds of principals reported that limited parent involvement was a barrier to the application of high standards for student achievement, compared to only 42 percent of principals in non-Title I schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). According to the 1997 National Survey of America's Families only 34 percent of children from low-income families were engaged actively in school compared with 45 percent of children from higher income families (Moore, Ehrle, & Brown, 1999).

Why is parental involvement an issue for schoolwide reading programs?

There are other factors besides classroom instruction and core program design that impact learning to read. Research confirms that what young children learn, how they react to events and in social situations, and what they expect from themselves, are affected deeply by their relationships with their parents (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Children enter kindergarten armed with the skills and knowledge engendered by their home literacy environments. Literacy-rich home environments include many opportunities to practice language by singing, listening to audiotapes and stories read aloud, and engaging with print. Children growing up in these homes experience interesting talk with many new words and literacy activities (Dickenson & Tabors, 2001).

Children emerge from literacy-rich homes with stronger language skills than children from homes that have few print materials and engaging oral communication patterns, regardless of income level (Denton, & West, 2002). Further, children's progress in reading during kindergarten and first grade is related to their home literacy resources when they first entered kindergarten (Denton, West, &Walston, 2003). Essential reading constructs, such as print

awareness and concepts, knowledge of text, reading for fun, vocabulary, and discourse were affected by the family and home environment. Improving school-to-home communication can introduce new home-based strategies for parents to support their children as literacy learners and, when the parents are responsive, improve the literacy awareness of their student's younger silblings.

The significance of parental involvement in schools was especially strong in a study of fourth graders (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). Where parental involvement was minimal, classroom reading means averaged 46 points below the national average. Conversely, where parental involvement was high, classroom scores were 28 points above the average. When the fathers were involved in their children's education by attending school meetings and parent conferences and volunteering at school and other activities, their children were more likely to earn As, enjoy learning, and participate in school activities. Not surprisingly, these children were less likely to repeat a grade (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

What did schools in the pilot study do that motivated parents to become actively involved in the school's reading program?

All schools visited made extensive efforts to involve parents in the Reading First program. Typically these have included open houses, literacy nights, newsletters, sign-off reading assignments, Parents as Teachers programs, and parent-teacher conferences. Administrators and coaches reported mostly positive comments from parents regarding Reading First, although mixed results have been realized regarding actual parental involvement in the program. Parent attendance varied by event from very few to full houses.

Parental contact at every school visited had an open-door policy. Data collectors noted that the consistent exception was that there were no visits to the principal or teachers during reading blocks. Principals encouraged parents and caregivers to contact teachers, coaches, and principals with questions they had about the reading program or their children's progress.

Initially, a minority of parents expressed concern about the 90-minute reading block. A few felt the block was too long for such young students and that the emphasis on reading took away from other subject areas. These reservations tended to disappear when student progress in reading became evident.

Many coaches and principals in the pilot schools credited frequent personal contact with parents to having designated someone as the school parent liaison because they had worked very well to get parents excited about the new program. The pilot schools—located in communities with high poverty levels—all had histories of poor reading achievement across the board. However, numerous factors were credited for minimal parental interest in the reading program. These included poverty as well as low parental-education levels, single-parent households, drug use, frequent moves, criminal activity, and illness.

The data collectors noted reports that some parents who were English language learners (ELLs) expressed concern about the new reading program. Although ELL students on the whole appeared to be progressing well, some parents expressed a preference for their children to be grouped together by English language facility for reading and not be included in the reading block. In one region, the Hispanic community approached the local school board to express their doubts about whether the new program that included all children in whole- and small-group instruction for reading in the same classroom was an appropriate program for children who were not proficient with English.

The final concern expressed by parents was that 90 minutes was simply far too much time for kindergarten children to devote to reading. Teachers responded to this concern with a review of the content of the reading block. They showed parents the literacy workstations and walked them through a typical day. This seemed to satisfy most of the parents' concerns.

Stepping Stone 19: School-to-Home Communication

Use Figure 18 for both planning objectives and documenting existing school-to-parent communication and inclusion efforts.

Figure 18. School-to-Home Communication Frequency

School to Home	More Than Once a Week	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Twice Per Year	Annually	Summer	Rarely
Classroom newsletter about reading								
Parent teacher conference								
Student-led conference about reading progress								
E-mail								
Telephone call								
Video or photographs of children reading								

Comments: _____
_____
_____

Suggestions for change: _____
_____
_____
_____

Person leading the change effort: _____

Timeline (Dates): _____

Stepping Stone 20: Parental Involvement

Consider how effective your current school-to-home efforts are. Review them all with the team by comparison with the table below. In the following table, place an "X" within the box that best describes parental involvement at your school.

Figure 19. Parental Involvement Continuum

Attendance at family literacy events	80–100% attendance at one event	60–79% attendance at one event	40–59% attendance at one event	Less than 50% attendance at one event	No data available
Parents reporting reading with children	80–100% read 15 minutes per day at least 3 times per week	60–79% read 15 minutes per day at least 3 times per week	40–59% read 15 minutes per day at least 3 times per week	Less than 39% read 15 minutes per day at least 3 times per week	No data available
Parents reporting taking children to the public library	80–100%	60–79%	40–59%	Less than 39%	No data available
Parents have access to parental resources about reading and the NCLB Act	Parent Information Resource Center accessible	School provides free NCLB resources	Some teachers send home NCLB or reading resources	Few teachers provide parental resources	Minimal resources available

Additional Comments: _____
_____
_____
_____

Reflection on Stepping Stones

Review item responses and discuss the following questions with the entire self-study leadership team.

- How do teachers inform parents about their critical role in children's language development and literacy learning?

  _____

  _____

- To what extent are parents perceived by staff as integral to success of the reading program?

  _____

  _____

- In what ways are parents encouraged to participate in school-based literacy activities?

  _____

  _____

- How are active participants rewarded for their efforts?

  _____

  _____

- When does staff help parents learn about ways to promote children's language development and literacy learning at home?

  _____

  _____

- Is parental involvement an asset to the reading program? _____

  ⊙ If not, what steps are needed to increase parental involvement?

    _____

  ⊙ Who will lead this effort?

    _____

  ⊙ What are the immediate priorities for change?

    _____

Construct a realistic timeline for action steps.

Chapter 12: Putting it All Together

Stepping Stones are defined in this guide as stages or steps that help a self-study effort by elementary school educators achieve the goal of designing a schoolwide comprehensive reading program that ensures success for each and every student. A reader might be tempted to "skip a stone across the water" and read this page before undertaking the preceding steps that lead to systematic reading program reform. The reader's motivation may be to discern quickly where all his or her work is going to take the school in terms of a clear picture of just what the high-quality program is going to look like when running and successful.

Alas, program reform is about hands-on, hands-linked-with-other-peoples', elbow-greased, and thorough application of a cognitive-revolution process—changing how all the stakeholders think about reading, reading instruction, and learning to read. Such purposeful actions have been proven to create distinct and tangible reading programs that work. However, you cannot get there without engaging in an intensive, analytical, and systematic yet creative and collaborative process.

The Stepping Stones pilot study was a powerful affirmation that in order to break the trend of too many children achieving too little reading achievement, reading program reform must be based on a consistent model thoroughly grounded in scientifically based reading research that is shared, extoled, and well-modeled. The reading programs that made significant progress during the first year of new program implementation credited their success to ongoing professional development, classroom modeling by reading coaches who had extensive knowledge about reading processes, ample time scheduled for collaborative planning, and strong instructional leadership. Teachers—almost always committed to the effort wholeheartedly—understood that while change is stressful, increased student achievement is well worth it.

In the pilot study of more than 16,000 students (K–3), findings demonstrated significant aggregated growth across the board and across all measures of reading. Coaches and principals linked enhanced student achievement with teachers' expanded knowledge and skills about assessment. Teachers were reinforced positively for their facility to link professional development with daily practice. These educators were committed to a change process that centered on consistent constructs and principles about how children learn language and reading skills.

Administrators and teachers developed a keen appreciation that systematic reading instruction often involved certain sacrifices of practice autonomy. Teachers, novice to experienced, were challenged to believe in the combined expertise of program developers and to cast aside certain notions about how to teach reading. Teachers demonstrated fidelity to consistent models of instruction and monitored student progress regularly. They used test scores to fine-tune grouping strategies and match print materials with students to teach specific constructs and stimulate positive attitudes about reading.

In the end, a strong viable reading program involves everyone taking small steps together to make great strides in the reading achievement of all children.

References

Anderson, R. C. (1985). *Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the commission on reading.* Washington DC: National Academy of Education, Commission on Education and Public Policy.

Armor, D. J., Conry-Oseguera, P., Cox, M., King, N., McDonnell, L., & Pascal, A. et al. (1976). *Analysis of the school preferred reading program in selected Los Angeles minority schools.* Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corp. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R2007/R2007.pdf

Chall, J. S., & Squire, J. R. (1991). The publishing industry and textbooks. In R. Barr, M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, & P. D. Pearson (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research: Volume II* (pp. 120–146). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Consortium of Reading Excellence, Inc. (2003). *Reading coach course, part 1: Reading coach institute: Participant resource notebook.* Emeryville, CA: Author.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1990). Instructional policy into practice: "The power of the bottom over the top." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 12*(3), 233–241.

Denton, K., & West, J. (2002). *Children's reading and mathematics achievement in kindergarten and first grade* (NCES 2002-125). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education NCES, U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/2002125.pdf

Denton, K., West, J., & Walston, J. (2003). *Reading—young children's achievement and classroom experiences: Findings from the condition of education 2003* (NCES 2005-070). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2003/2003070.pdf

Dickenson, D. K., & Tabors, P. O. (Eds). (2001). *Beginning literacy with language: Young children at home and school.* Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Fletcher, J. M., & Francis, D. J. (2004) Scientifically based education research: Questions, designs, and mehtods. In P. D. McCardle, & V. Chhabra, *The voice of evidence in reading research.* Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Garet, M. S., Porter, A. C., Desimone, L., Birman, B. F., & Yoon, K. S. (2001). What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, *38*(4), 915–945. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://aztla.asu.edu/ProfDev1.pdf

Hallinger, P., Bickman, L., & Davis, K. (1996). School context, principal leadership, and student reading achievement. *Elementary School Journal, 96*(5), 527–549.

Huey, E. B. (1908). *The psychology and pedagogy of reading*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

International Reading Association. (2003). *Investment in teacher preparation in the United States* (Position statement). Newark, DE: Author. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.reading.org/downloads/positions/ps1060_teacher_preparation.pdf

Joyce, B., & Weil, M. (1992). *Models of teaching*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Lieberman, A., & Miller, L. (1991). *Staff development for education in the '90s: New demands, new realities, new perspectives.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Learning First Alliance. (2000). *Every child reading: A professional development guide*. Baltimore, MD: Author. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://cdl.org/resource-library/pdf/Moats_readingguide.pdf

Levesque, J., & Hinton, K. (2001). *Show me family literacy! Missouri's guide to establishing family literacy programs*. St. Louis: MO: LIFT-Missouri. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://lift-missouri.org/resources/smfl/front.pdf

McBrien, J. L., & Brandt, R. S. (1997). *The language of learning: A guide to education terms*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

McNergney, R. F., & Carrier, C. A. (1981). *Teacher development*. New York: Macmillan.

Moats, L. C. (1999). *Teaching reading is rocket science: What expert teachers of reading should know and should be able to do*. Washington DC: American Federation of Teachers. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/downloads/teachers/rocketsci.pdf

Moats, L. C., & Foorman, B. F. (2003). Measuring teachers' content knowledge of language and reading. *Annals of Dyslexia, 53*, 23–45.

Moore, K., Ehrle, J., & Brown, B. (1999). *Children's environment and behavior: High engagement in school*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/900867_1997Snapshots.pdf

Moos, R. H. (1979). *Evaluating educational environments.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). (2005). *Results of the 2005 national and state mathematics and reading assessments for grades 4 and 8*. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/

National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction: Reports of the subgroups* (NIH Publication No. 00-4754). Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrp/report.pdf

Neuman, S. B., Copple, C., & Bredekamp, S. (2000). *Learning to read and write: Developmentally appropriate practices for young children.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425. Subpart 1 § 1201 (2002). Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg4.html#sec1201

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425, Part B § 1208, Subsection 6 (2002a). Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg4.html#sec1208

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425, Part B, Supart 1 § 1202(c)(7)(A)(iv)(II)(bb) (2002b). Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg4.html

Ohio Department of Education. (2004). *The Ohio Department of Education K–3 reading program evaluation guide for supplemental and intervention materials and programs: A rubric.* Columbus, OH: Author. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.readingfirstohio.org/resources/funding/docs/Eval_Guide_for_Supplemental_&_Intervention.pdf

Paris, S. G., & Hoffman, J. V. (2004). Reading assessments in kindergarten through third grade: Findings from the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement. *The Elementary School Journal, 105*(2), 199–217.

Pearson, P. D., Sensale, L., Vyas, S., & Kim, Y. (1998, December). *Early literacy assessment: A marketplace analysis.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Reading Conference, Austin, TX.

Rathvon, N. (2004). *Early reading assessment: A practitioner's handbook.* New York: Guilford Press.

Roberts, G., & Fiala, A. (2004). *Using data to inform decision making with Reading First* [PowerPoint presentation]. Austin, TX: Central Region Reading First Technical Assistance Center, Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts, University of Texas–Austin.

Shaywitz, S. (2003). *Overcoming dyslexia: A new and complete science-based program for reading problems at any level.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Shonkhoff, J. P., & Phillips, D. A. (Eds.) (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development.* Washington, DC: National Academy Press. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.nap.edu/books/0309069882/html/

Simmons, D. C., & Kame'enui, E. J. (2003). *A consumer's guide to evaluating a core reading program grades K–3: A critical elements analysis.* Eugene, OR: Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement, College of Education, University of Oregon. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://reading.uoregon.edu/appendices/con_guide_3.1.03.pdf

Snow, C. E., Burns, M. S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.) (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children.* Washington, DC: National Academies Press. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.nap.edu/books/030906418X/html/

Spellman, M. (2005, July). *Reading first.* Keynote speech at the second annual Reading First Conference, New Orleans, LA.

Taylor, B. M., & Pearson, P. D. (2000). *Schoolwide reading improvement: What does the research say? How do we make it happen?* [PowerPoint presentation]. Ann Arbor, MI: Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.ciera.org/library/presos/2000/2000-IRA/taylor/taylor-ira-2000.pdf

Taylor, B. M., Pearson, P. D., Clark, K., & Walpole, S. (2000). Effective schools and accomplished teachers: Lessons about primary-grade reading instruction in low-income schools. *The Elementary School Journal, 101*(2), 121–166.

Torgesen, J. K. (2002). The prevention of reading difficulties. *Journal of School Psychology, 40*(1), 7–26.

University of Texas–Austin. (2003). *Preventing reading difficulties: A three-tiered intervention model.* Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.texasreading.org/3tier/

U.S. Department of Education. (1999). *Promising results, continuing challenges: Final report of the national assessment of Title I.* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved http://165.224.220.253/rschstat/eval/disadv/promisingresults/natirpt.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2005). *No child left behind.* Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml

Vaughn, S., Klingner, J. K., Bryant, D. P. (2001). Collaborative strategic reading as a means to enhance peer-mediated instruction for reading comprehension and content-area learning. *Journal of Remedial and Special Education, 22*(2), 66–74.

Recommended Resources

American Educational Research Association (AERA). (2005). Teaching teachers: Professional development to improve student achievement. *Research Points, 3*(1). Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.aera.net/uploadedFiles/Journals_and_Publications/Research_Points/RPSummer05.pdf

Andrews, R. L., & Soder, R. (1987). Principal leadership and student achievement. *Educational Leadership, 44*(6), 9–11.

Ball, D. L., Phelps, G., Rowan, B., & Schilling, S. (2003). *Measuring teachers' content knowledge for teaching reading: Elementary reading release items.* Ann Arbor, MI: Study of Instructional Improvement.

Baumann, J. F., Hoffman, J. V., Duffy-Hester, A. M., & Ro, J. M. (2000). The first R yesterday and today: U.S. elementary reading instruction practices reported by teachers and administrators. *Reading Research Quarterly, 35*(3), 338–377.

Briggs, K. L., & Thomas, K. (1997). *Patterns of success: Successful pathways to elementary literacy in Texas Spotlight Schools.* Austin, TX: Texas Center for Educational Research.

Chard, D., Coyne, M., Edwards, L., Good, R., Harn, B., & Kame'enui, E. J. et al. (2004). Big ideas in beginning reading. Eugene, OR: Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://reading.uoregon.edu/appendices/contents.php

Cobb, J. B., & Allen, D. D. (2004) A tool for observing literacy tutors: The volunteer tutor instructional practices checklist. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 9*(1), 47–64. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.leaonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1207/S15327671ESPR0901_3

Early Literacy Project. (2004). *Literacy environment/opportunities checklist*. Toronto, ON, Canada: Augmentative Communication Community Partnerships–Canada. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.accpc.ca/Literacy_EnvOppor_Checklist.pdf

Eisner, E. W. (2001). What does it mean to say a school is doing well? *Phi Delta Kappan, 82*(5), 367–372.

Garet, M. S., Porter, A. C., Desimone, L., Birman, B. F., & Yoon, K. S. (2001). What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, *38*(4), 915–945. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://aztla.asu.edu/ProfDev1.pdf

Gupton, S. L. (2003). *The instructional leadership toolbox: A handbook for improving practice.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Hoffman, J. V. (2001). Teaching every child to read: How do I create a literacy-rich environment for children? In D. Birdyshaw, M. S. Burns, J. F. Carlisle, N. K. Duke, G. E. Garcia, & J. V. Hoffman, et al., *Teaching every child to read: Frequently asked questions.* Ann Arbor, MI: Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement.

Kame'enui, E. J. (2005, June). *Assessment and professional development: Linking educator performance to student performance: Ode to Kalihi* [PowerPoint presentation]. Presented at the Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) Focus on Professional Development in Early Reading Forum, Honolulu, HI. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.prel.org/programs/rel/profdev/Kameenui.ppt

Kennedy, M. M., Ball, D. L., & McDiarmid, G. W. (1993) *A study package for examining and tracking changes in teachers' knowledge* (Technical Series 93-1). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, National Center for Research on Teacher Education. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://ncrtl.msu.edu/http/tseries/ts931.pdf

Morris, B. (2004). *Supporting good reading instruction: A guide for principals.* Charlottesville, VA: Reading First in Virginia. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.readingfirst.virginia.edu/pdfs/Morris_white_paper.pdf

Murphy, J. (2004). *Leadership for literacy: Research-based practice, PreK–3*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

National Staff Development Council. (2005). *NSDC standards for staff development.* Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.nsdc.org/standards/index.cfm

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. (2004). *Federal guidelines for Reading First professional development plans at the local level.* Naperville, IL: Author. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.ncrel.org/rf/pd/guidel.htm

Padak, N., & Padak, G. (1994). *Research to practice: Guidelines for planning action research projects*. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://archon.educ.kent.edu/Oasis/Pubs/0200-08.htm

The Partnership for Reading. (n.d.). *The secretary's reading leadership academies.* Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/presentations/reading_leadership.html

Patty, D., Maschof, J. D., & Ransom, P. E. (1996). *The reading resource handbook for school leaders*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

Shavelson, R. J., & Towne, L. (Eds.) (2002). *Scientific research in education.* Washington, DC: National Academies Press. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.nap.edu/openbook/0309082919/html/

Simmons, D. C., & Kame'enui, E. J. (2003). *A consumer's guide to evaluating a core reading program, grades K–3: A critical elements analysis.* Eugene, OR: Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement, University of Oregon. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://reading.uoregon.edu/appendices/con_guide_3.1.03.pdf

Sopris West. (2004). *LETRS program overview.* Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.letrs.com/program_overview.asp?PageID=323&TypeID=

Taylor, B. M., Pearson, P. D., Clark, K. F., & Walpole, S. (1999). *Beating the odds in teaching all children to read.* (CIERA Report #2-006). Ann Arbor, MI: Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement. Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.ciera.org/library/reports/inquiry-2/2-006/2-006%20Front%20Matter.html

Taylor, B. M., Pearson, P. D., Clark, K., & Walpole, S. (2000). Effective schools and accomplished teachers: Lessons about primary-grade reading instruction in low-income schools. *The Elementary School Journal, 101*(2), 121–166.

Torgesen, J. K. (2002). The prevention of reading difficulties. *Journal of School Psychology, 40*(1), 7–26.

University of Oregon Center on Teaching and Learning. (2004). *Official DIBELS Home Page.* Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://dibels.uoregon.edu

University of Texas–Austin. (2003). *Preventing reading difficulties: A three-tiered intervention model.* Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.texasreading.org/3tier/

U.S. Department of Education. (2005). *No Child Left Behind.* Retrieved November 18, 2005, from http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml

Walpole, S., & McKenna, M. C. (2004). *The literacy coach's handbook: A guide to research-based practive.* New York: Guilford Press.

Appendix

Reading Instruction Classroom Observation Tool for Principals

School: _____   Teacher: _____

Date of observation: _____

Grade level _____

Person observing: Coach _____

Principal: _____

Number of children in whole class: _____

Number receiving strategic instruction: _____

Number receiving intervention: _____

Time
Start: _____   End: _____

Observation Summary

Signature: _____   Date of Summary: _____

Instructional Focus

For each 10 minutes of the classroom observation, the principal should check all of the teacher modeling and demonstrating that occurs in student practice, instructional support, transition activity, academic management, and behavior management. Each observation should consist of no fewer than three 10-minute, consecutive blocks of instruction.

Reading Components

___ Phonemic awareness ___ Phonics ___ Fluency
___ Vocabulary ___ Comprehension

Grouping

___ Whole class ___ Large group (6 or more) ___ Small group
___ Pair ___ Individual

Adults Present

___ Teacher ___ Coteacher ___ Student teacher
___ Title I aide ___ Coach ___ Special educator
___ Volunteer

Instrument 1: Teacher Behaviors—First 10-Minute Observation

Time
Start: _____ End: _____

Check all that apply.

Reading Component	Teacher Models or Demonstrates		Students Practice	
Phonemic awareness	Oral work with syllables		Oral work with syllables	
	Oral work with onset-rimes		Oral work with onset-rimes	
	Other work with sounds		Other work with sounds	
Phonics and print decoding	Sound and symbol pattern or decoding rule		Decoding words	
Student oral reading	How to apply patterns and rules to words		Spelling words that teacher models	
	Helps students correct mistakes		Writing words	

Reading Component	Teacher Models or Demonstrates		Students Practice	
Fluency	Directs students to read a passage (first time) that has been modeled fluently		Reading connected text aloud	
	Directs students to read a passage (second time) that has not been modeled fluently		Reading connected text aloud	
	Times students as they practice fluency		Improving oral reading rate, accuracy, and prosody	
Vocabulary	Word meaning (definition)		Understanding word meaning	
	Synonyms		Using word-learning strategies	
	Contrast words		Using word-learning strategies	
Comprehension	Prereading activities (e.g., using prior knowledge, previewing passage, generating questions, predicting content)		Literal recalling of text	
	Comprehension strategies		Using content clues (e.g., pictures, format)	
	Retelling; sequencing; inferencing; predicting; making text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections; summarizing (main ideas)		Constructing meaning beyond literal recall (e.g., retelling; drawing inferences; predicting; making text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections; summarizing	
	Monitoring comprehension (e.g., generate questions about what was read, reread to make meaning, answer questions, confirm and reject predictions)		Monitoring comprehension (checking understanding by generating questions about material, rereading to make meaning, answering inferential questions, and confirming and rejecting predictions)	
	Work with story grammar or expository structure		Working with story grammar or expository structure	

Reading Component	Teacher Models or Demonstrates		Students Practice	
Other instruction	Reading orally from big book, chapter book, or story-and-text book and periodically posing questions to students		Listening comprehension	
	Spelling		Spelling	
	Written expression (original)		Written expression (original, not copying)	
	Listens to students read connected text aloud (not fluency practice)		Oral reading of connected text (not fluency practice)	
Instructional support	Manipulatives or physical demonstration		Manipulatives (hands-on), kinesthetics (body movement)	
	Visual aids (e.g., chart, pictures, objects)		Enhanced understanding of sounds, vocabulary, or text	
Transition	Directs students to move from one activity to the next		Orderly transition from one learning activity to the next	
Academic management	Grading student work, handing out materials, setting up lesson materials		Independent work or small-group activities	
Behavior management	Interrupts instruction or student practice to manage student behavior*		Conducting disruptions to others or are off task	

* Put a √ each time the teacher interrupts the flow of instruction, student practice, transition, or academic management

Notes: _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Instrument 2. Teacher Behaviors—Second 10-Minute Observation

Time
Start: _____ End: _____

Check all that apply.

Reading Component	Teacher Models or Demonstrates		Students Practice	
Phonemic awareness	Oral work with syllables		Oral work with syllables	
	Oral work with onset-rimes		Oral work with onset-rimes	
	Other work with sounds		Other work with sounds	
Phonics and print decoding	Sound and symbol pattern or decoding rule		Decoding words	
Student oral reading	How to apply patterns and rules to words		Spelling words that teacher models	
	Helps students correct mistakes		Writing words	
Fluency	Directs students to read a passage (first time) that has been modeled fluently		Reading connected text aloud	
	Directs students to read a passage (second time) that has not been modeled fluently		Reading connected text aloud	
	Times students as they practice fluency		Improving oral reading rate, accuracy, and prosody	
Vocabulary	Word meaning (definition)		Understanding word meaning	
	Synonyms		Using word-learning strategies	
	Contrast words		Using word-learning strategies	

Reading Component	Teacher Models or Demonstrates		Students Practice	
Comprehension	Prereading activities (e.g., using prior knowledge, previewing passage, generating questions, predicting content)		Literal recalling of text	
	Comprehension strategies		Using content clues (e.g., pictures, format)	
	Retelling; sequencing; inferencing; predicting; making text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections; summarizing (main ideas)		Constructing meaning beyond literal recall (e.g., retelling; drawing inferences; predicting; making text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections; summarizing	
	Monitoring comprehension (e.g., generate questions about what was read, reread to make meaning, answer questions, confirm and reject predictions)		Monitoring comprehension (checking understanding by generating questions about material, rereading to make meaning, answering inferential questions, and confirming and rejecting predictions)	
	Work with story grammar or expository structure		Working with story grammar or expository structure	
Other instruction	Reading orally from big book, chapter book, or story-and-text book and periodically posing questions to students		Listening comprehension	
	Spelling		Spelling	
	Written expression (original)		Written expression (original, not copying)	
	Listens to students read connected text aloud (not fluency practice)		Oral reading of connected text (not fluency practice)	
Instructional support	Manipulatives or physical demonstration		Manipulatives (hands-on), kinesthetics (body movement)	
	Visual aids (e.g., chart, pictures, objects)		Enhanced understanding of sounds, vocabulary, or text	

Reading Component	Teacher Models or Demonstrates		Students Practice	
Transition	Directs students to move from one activity to the next		Orderly transition from one learning activity to the next	
Academic management	Grading student work, handing out materials, setting up lesson materials		Independent work or small-group activities	
Behavior management	Interrupts instruction or student practice to manage student behavior*		Conducting disruptions to others or are off task	

* Put a √ each time the teacher interrupts the flow of instruction, student practice, transition, or academic management

Notes: _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Instrument 3. Teacher Behaviors—Third 10-Minute Observation

Time
Start: _____ End: _____

Check all that apply.

Reading Component	Teacher Models or Demonstrates		Students Practice	
Phonemic awareness	Oral work with syllables		Oral work with syllables	
	Oral work with onset-rimes		Oral work with onset-rimes	
	Other work with sounds		Other work with sounds	
Phonics and print decoding	Sound and symbol pattern or decoding rule		Decoding words	
Student oral reading	How to apply patterns and rules to words		Spelling words that teacher models	
	Helps students correct mistakes		Writing words	
Fluency	Directs students to read a passage (first time) that has been modeled fluently		Reading connected text aloud	
	Directs students to read a passage (second time) that has not been modeled fluently		Reading connected text aloud	
	Times students as they practice fluency		Improving oral reading rate, accuracy, and prosody	
Vocabulary	Word meaning (definition)		Understanding word meaning	
	Synonyms		Using word-learning strategies	
	Contrast words		Using word-learning strategies	

Reading Component	Teacher Models or Demonstrates		Students Practice	
Comprehension	Prereading activities (e.g., using prior knowledge, previewing passage, generating questions, predicting content)		Literal recalling of text	
	Comprehension strategies		Using content clues (e.g., pictures, format)	
	Retelling; sequencing; inferencing; predicting; making text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections; summarizing (main ideas)		Constructing meaning beyond literal recall (e.g., retelling; drawing inferences; predicting; making text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections; summarizing	
	Monitoring comprehension (e.g., generate questions about what was read, reread to make meaning, answer questions, confirm and reject predictions)		Monitoring comprehension (checking understanding by generating questions about material, rereading to make meaning, answering inferential questions, and confirming and rejecting predictions)	
	Work with story grammar or expository structure		Working with story grammar or expository structure	
Other instruction	Reading orally from big book, chapter book, or story-and-text book and periodically posing questions to students		Listening comprehension	
	Spelling		Spelling	
	Written expression (original)		Written expression (original, not copying)	
	Listens to students read connected text aloud (not fluency practice)		Oral reading of connected text (not fluency practice)	
Instructional support	Manipulatives or physical demonstration		Manipulatives (hands-on), kinesthetics (body movement)	
	Visual aids (e.g., chart, pictures, objects)		Enhanced understanding of sounds, vocabulary, or text	

Reading Component	Teacher Models or Demonstrates		Students Practice	
Transition	Directs students to move from one activity to the next		Orderly transition from one learning activity to the next	
Academic management	Grading student work, handing out materials, setting up lesson materials		Independent work or small-group activities	
Behavior management	Interrupts instruction or student practice to manage student behavior*		Conducting disruptions to others or are off task	

* Put a √ each time the teacher interrupts the flow of instruction, student practice, transition, or academic management

Notes: _____
_____
_____
_____
_____